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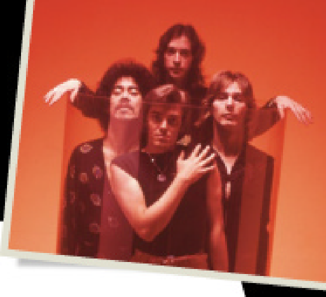

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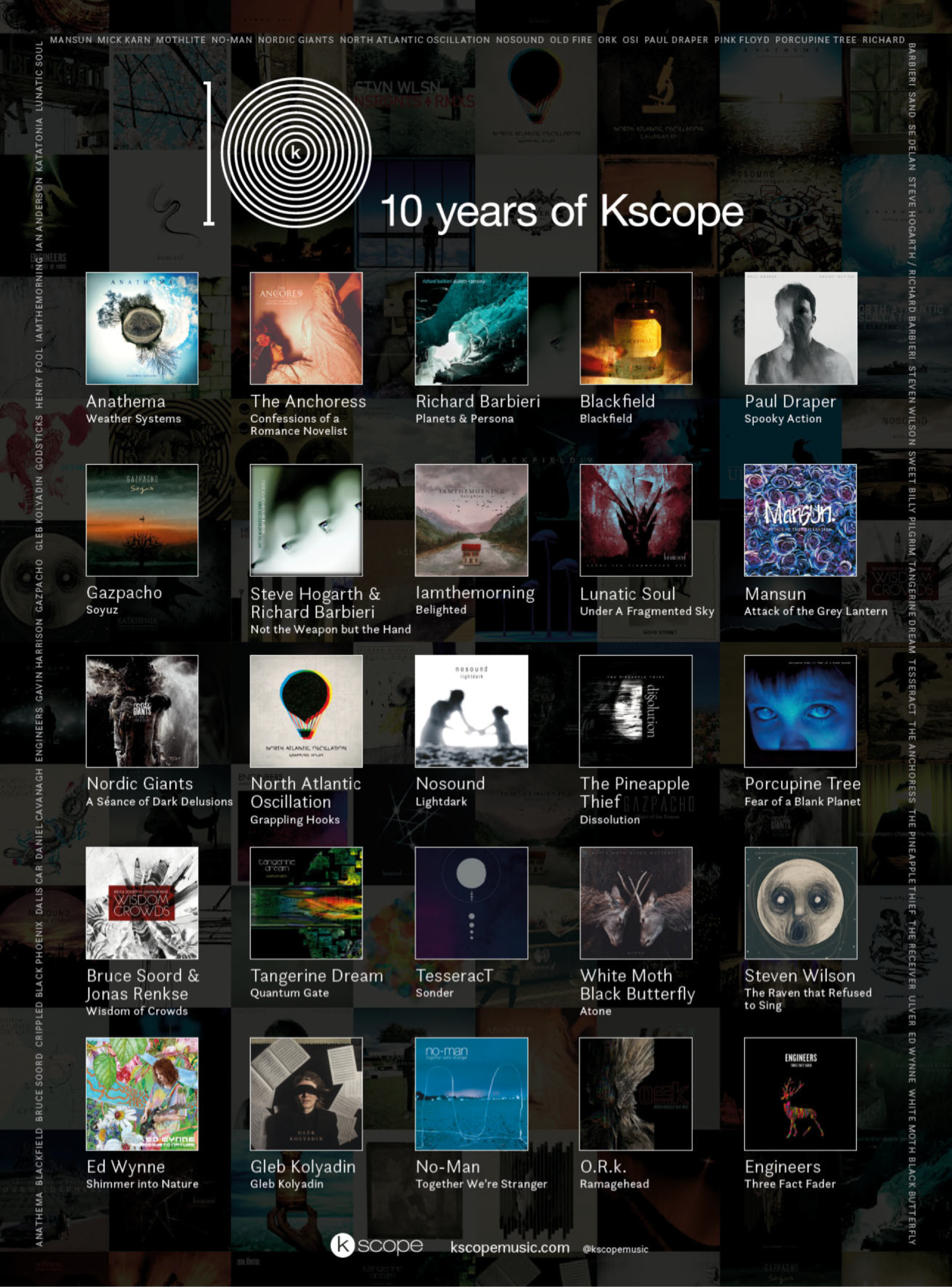

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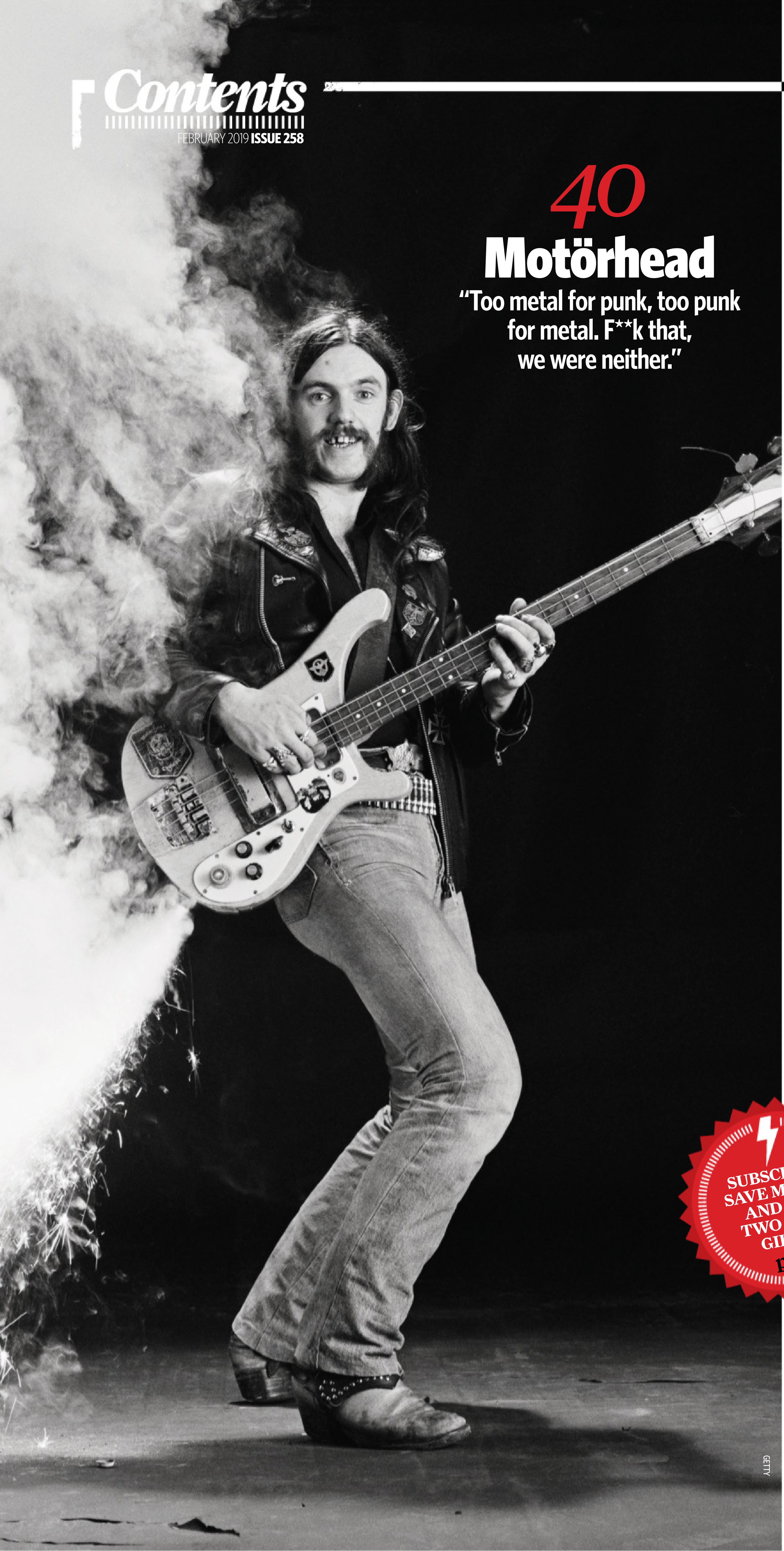

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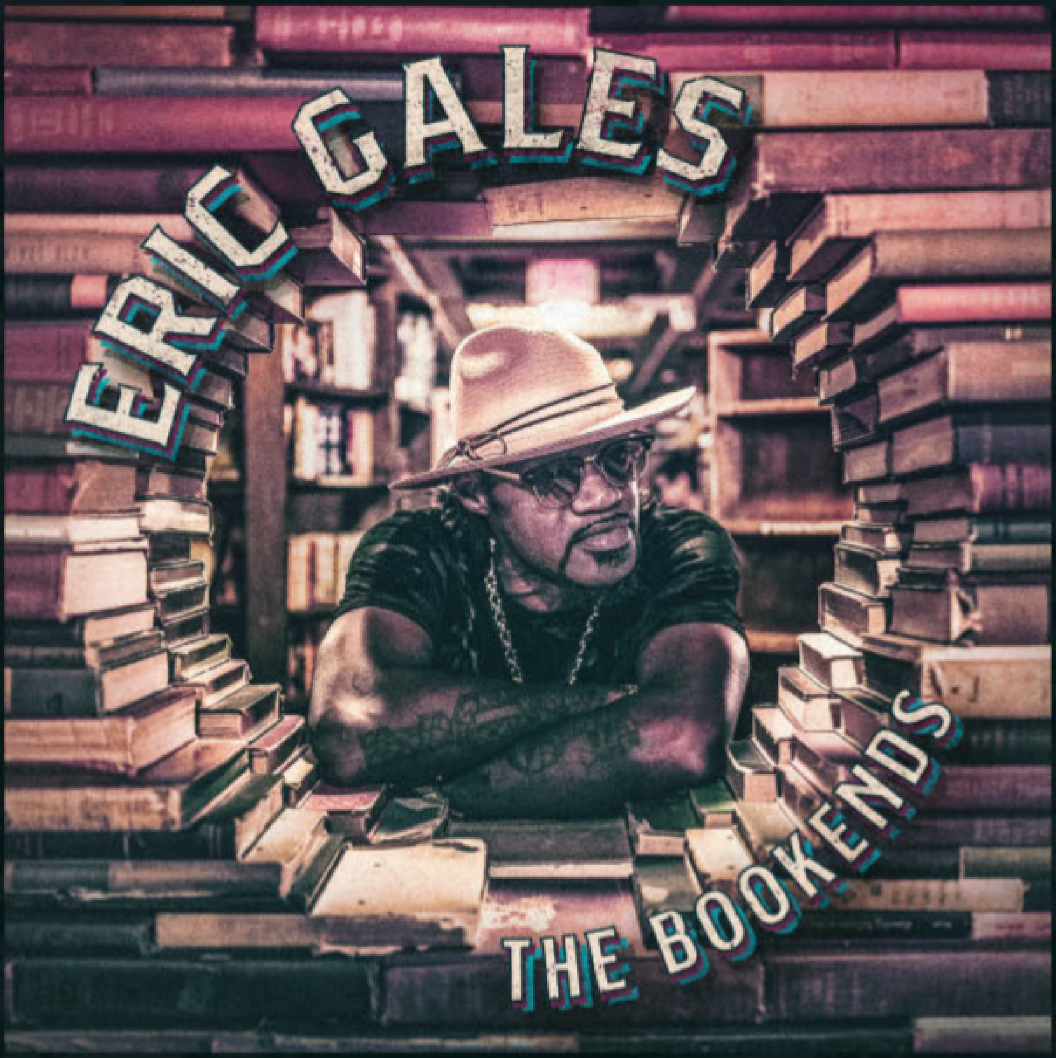

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HERE I GO AGAIN
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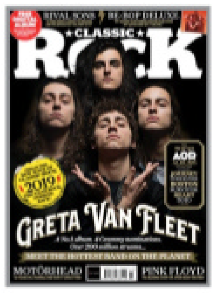
There's definitely something in the air. And it's a good thing.

Last year, one of the biggest (and most surprising, if we're honest) stories was that of Greta Van Fleet. So much so that many of the established names we spoke to last issue for our Review Of 2018 were singing the band's praises unprompted.

It's been forever since a new *rock* band has caught the imagination of the wider world, racking up huge statistics of radio and streaming plays, Grammy Award nominations, No.1 singles, sold-out shows… The Darkness are probably the last band I can think of that really transcended the rock niche. But GVF, three siblings and their pal from Michigan, have managed the nearly impossible and are taking rock into the mainstream again. We spoke to the band and those at the eye of the GVF hurricane to discover more before they head back to the UK in a few weeks to consolidate their triumphant jaunt last November. Are they the new Led Zeppelin? You decide.

Speaking of Led Zeppelin, this month marks the 50th anniversary of not only the release of their debut album, but also of their first American tour. In celebration, this issue includes a special additional Led Zeppelin magazine, telling the story of *Led Zeppelin I* and taking an in-depth look at some of those first US shows. Enjoy!

Siân Llewellyn, Editor



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This month's contributors

DAVE LEWIS
Long-time *Classic Rock* contributor Dave Lewis (pictured left with Jimmy Page in 1980) spent over five years with co-author Mike Tremaglio collating the remarkable *Evenings With Led Zeppelin* book which is showcased in our very special Led Zeppelin supplement this month. For more on Led Zeppelin visit www.tightbutloose.co.uk

DAVE EVERLEY
We just about broke 'Diamond' Dave Everley this issue. We sent him to Los Angeles to chat with Rival Sons (p34), and then to speak to rock upstarts Greta Van Fleet for our cover story (p24). We then diverted him to Texas where he spent some quality time with Gary Clark Jr for a future issue. As far as we know, he did make it back home for Christmas.

JON HOTTEN
It's been a while since the words of long-time *Classic Rock* writer Jon Hotten have graced our pages – he's been busy writing books. But if anything was going to tempt him out of his literary hole, it was the opportunity to wax lyrical about the 50 greatest AOR albums of all time (p61). Jon is the author of *My Life And The Beautiful Music* and many other brilliant books.

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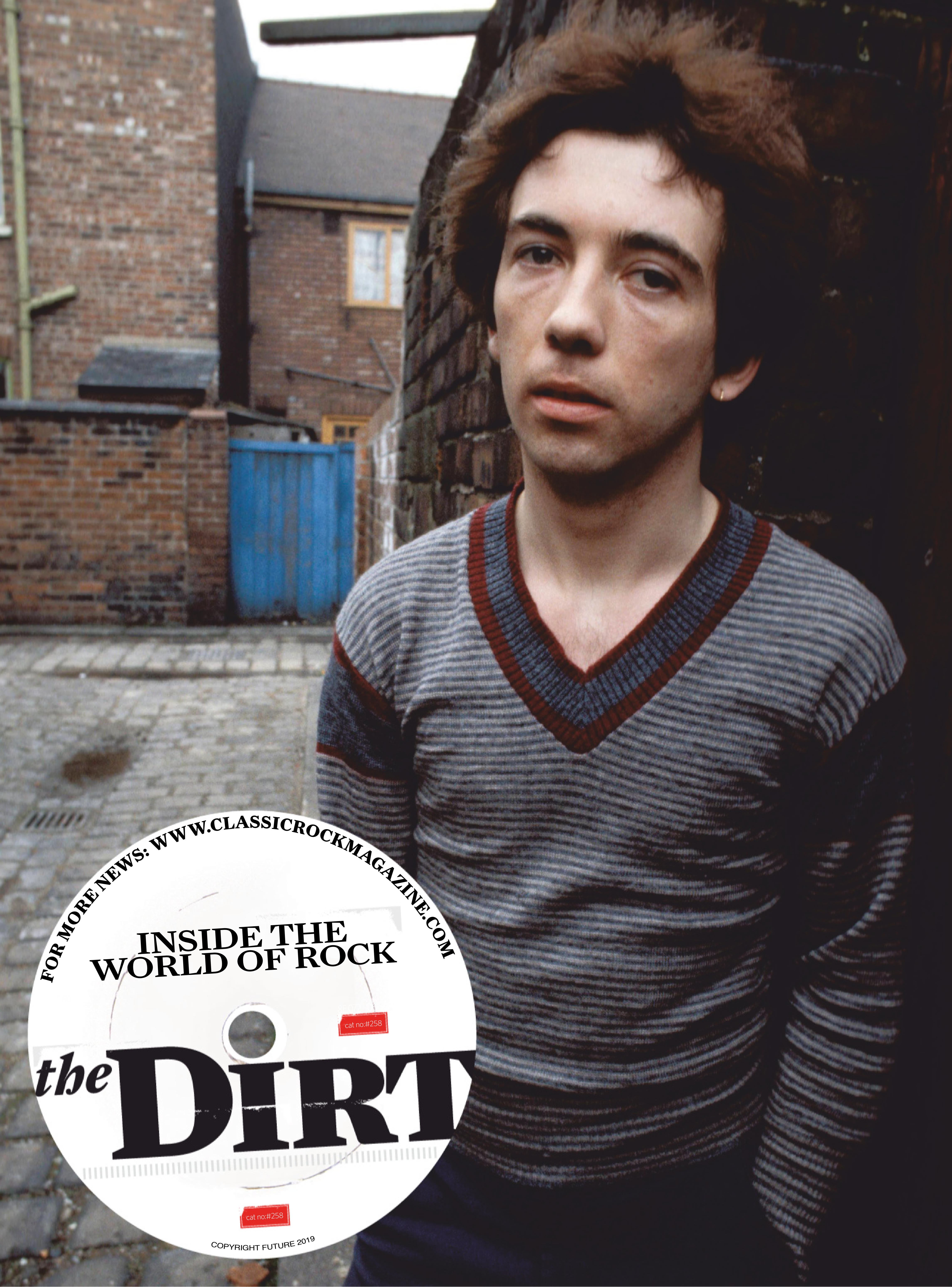
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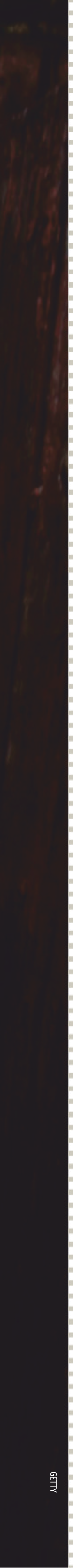

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Pete Shelley

17 April 1955 – 6 December 2018

Everett True looks back at the life and times of the Buzzcocks singer and songwriter.

Tributes have been pouring in for Pete Shelley, the lead singer of Mancunian punk band Buzzcocks, who died of a suspected heart attack on December 6 at the age 63. Love, sadness, humour, passion – an outpouring of a personal grief, made more poignant because his music felt so secret and special to so many. As Stephen McRobbie, singer with Scotland's shy romantics The Pastels, puts it: "I always come back to them, to their deceptive simplicity, the brilliance of it all, the thrill. They were the way into punk and the way out of it."

Born Peter McNeish in Leigh, Lancashire on April 17, 1955, Pete Shelley was the son of ex-mill worker and a colliery fitter. He began writing songs while attending Leigh Grammar School, and later bought a four-track tape recorder when he was studying for an HND electronics degree at Bolton Institute of Technology.

The first Buzzcocks gig I saw was at Chelmsford Odeon in 1978. It was late on for the group, who had already released two albums, but the show was sharp, edgy, acerbic. The first – and last – pop band I fell totally in love with were Buzzcocks. Their songs spoke directly to me: too sensitive to be classed alongside their swaggering male punk peers, too catchy, yet they were clearly punk – coy and imaginative, naughty and conflicted and pansexual. "[Pete] showed that you didn't have to be political or angry to be punk," says original Sex Pistols bassist Glen Matlock. True, although to me he always seemed both.

Buzzcocks formed in 1975, after Shelley saw an ad from fellow BIT student Howard Devoto (née Trafford) looking for musicians into the Velvet Underground song *Sister Ray*. In February 1976 the pair went to London to see the Sex Pistols play after reading a brief *NME* write-up of the punk band's first performance.

Impressed, Shelley and Devoto arranged the Pistols' first Manchester gig, at the Lesser Free Trade Hall on June 4, 1976. It has long been noted that the gig gestated the city's punk scene – only 42 people attended, but they included Morrissey and members of Joy Division and The Fall. Shelley and Devoto were unable to put together a band in time to play that night, but they managed to add bassist Steve Diggle and drummer John Maher in time to play support at a second Pistols performance the following month.

By the end of 1976, Shelley had persuaded his dad to loan him £250 to pay for the pressing and recording of an EP, released on manager Richard Boon's New Hormones label. Not only was *Spiral Scratch* killer punk, it also served to inspire hordes of DIY heads to demystify the process of releasing records (Rough Trade, for example, started after founder Geoff Travis bought a copy). In doing this, *Spiral Scratch* was a more important record than the Pistols' *Anarchy The UK* – the latter only showed that anyone could be in a band, whereas the former proved that anyone could take control of the means of production. *Spiral Scratch* ended up selling 16,000 copies.

Devoto left shortly after its release to form the art-prog-punk band Magazine, after which Diggle moved from bass to guitar and Shelley – the reluctant pop star right from the start – to lead vocals. Whereas Devoto's songs were sharp, sardonic, cutting, Pete was able to go right to the heart of adolescent love; lust, confusion.

The band signed with United Artists on August 16 1977, and began to release a series of seven-inch singles and albums (drop-dead cool artwork courtesy of Malcolm Garrett) unmatched to the present day. Wickedly naughty, their first single was an ode to the joys of masturbation: *'Sneaking in the back door with dirty magazines, now your mother wants to know 'bout all those stains on your jeans.' Orgasm Addict* was released in November 1977 and, unsurprisingly, wasn't played on the BBC. Their second single had the abrupt one-finger salute *Oh Shit* as its B-side, but the A-side was the pop nugget *What Do I Get?*. Quickly, Buzzcocks found a natural home in both the charts and fledgling pop magazine *Smash Hits*.

Their chart-bound singles – sharp, acerbic, bittersweet pop songs that rarely reached the three-minute mark – detailed conflicted romance. *'You spurn my natural emotions/You make me feel I'm dirt and I'm hurt,'* Shelley sang on the No.12 hit *Ever Fallen In Love (With Someone You Shouldn't've)*. *'I even think you hate me, when you call me on the phone,'* he lamented on *I Don't Mind*, in an unafraid, unapologetic way that few of his male peers managed. The fact that you never knew which gender he was addressing increased the poignancy. To this lonely Chelmsford boy, unable to understand the unspoken social protocols of boy-girl, boy-boy relationships and teenage love, his songs were panacea. *Promises* (No.20), the acidic, *Brave New World*-inspired *Everybody's Happy Nowadays* (No.29) and Diggle's *Harmony In My Head* (No.32) kept the hits coming. Shelley could do in 90 seconds what other bands couldn't manage over entire albums – tell a story, reach your heart.

Over two short years, Buzzcocks released the albums *Another Music In A Different Kitchen* and *Love Bites* (both 1978) and *A Different Kind Of Tension* ('79). So much, so soon. Indeed so fast that by the time I saw them play again, in 1979, it almost felt like they'd burnt themselves out, so brightly did their star shine. All three are flawless, despite criticism raised at the time that the second was patchy (name me just *one* weak song!) and the last one too experimental. Apparently.

After the band split in 1980, Shelley began work on a solo album with Martin Rushent, the producer who'd shaped the Buzzcocks' pop-punk sound. The result was the synth-pop single *Homosapien* – which should have been massive, but the BBC took issue with its mischievous homo-erotica – and an album of the same name. Other solo albums followed, notably 1983's *XL1* with its minor hit *Telephone Operator,* but his solo career never really took off. Perhaps Shelley was too modest.

In 1989, Buzzcocks re-formed, initially as a touring band, and released a series of albums, beginning with *Trade Test Transmissions* (1993), all of which had their moments but none of which matched the band's glorious initial explosion. For, as Shelley sang bittersweet on stage thousands of times, *'I'm surfing on a wave of nostalgia, for an age yet to come'*.

Notably, in 1994 Kurt Cobain asked the band to support Nirvana on what would turn out to be Nirvana's final tour. The link between the two sensitive, almost reluctant stars is palpable.

In 2012 Pete Shelley went to live in Tallinn, Estonia with his second wife, Greta. He is survived by his younger brother Gary, Greta and a son from his first marriage.

There is a campaign to make *Ever Fallen In Love (With Someone You Shouldn't've)*, the band's best-known song, the Christmas No.1. Let's hope it succeeds. Because we all did, didn't we?

HIGH FIVE

A fistful of classic Buzzcocks songs.

Love You More

One minute 50 seconds of (im)perfect pop perfection. Buzzcocks' first appearance on *Top Of The Pops*. The song that spawned an entire genre: post-grunge 1990s punk, as typified by Green Day – brutal and eloquent in its truculent razor-sharp execution.

Ever Fallen In Love (With Someone You Shouldn't've)

From second album *Love Bites*. The title is taken from dialogue in the Hollywood musical *Guys And Dolls*. Very poignant, in the context of Shelley's bisexuality. "I loved the word 'shouldn't've' and all its apostrophes," Shelley told music critic Dave Simpson. A genius amalgam of Krautrock, sardonic punk attitude, lovelorn lyrics and irresistible hooks.

Boredom

From *Spiral Scratch*. The classic two-note guitar line (repeated 66 times). Punk has rarely sounded so disaffected or moving. Or satirical. '*You know the scene is very humdrum,*' Devoto spits, bored already with identikit punk. *'I'm already a has-been!'*

You Say You Don't Love Me

From *A Different Kind Of Tension*, this is the Buzzcocks' own *Shakespeare's Sister* (The Smiths), the song that should have been. Wrong place, wrong time – but with a *massive* pop-punk hook so smart it's dumb/so dumb it's smart that's easily the equal of better-known singles such as *What Do I Get?* or *Promises*.

ESP

From *Love Bites*. Pete Shelley just won't let go. *'Do you believe in ESP?/I do and I'm try'n'a get through to you/If you're picking up off me, then you know just what to do.'* As dark as anything Joy Division produced, and as chilling and relentless too.

This month The Dirt was compiled by Malcolm Dome, Emma Johnston, Dave Ling, Everett True, Henry Yates

RIP

Thank you
and good night.

Eddie C Campbell

May 6, 1939 – November 20, 2018

Born in Mississippi 79 years ago, by the time he was 12 Eddie C Campbell was sitting in with Muddy Waters's band. The guitarist/singer was a sideman for Howlin' Wolf, Little Walter, Little Johnny Taylor and Jimmy Reed, before Willie Dixon pulled him into the Chicago Blues All-Stars in 1976.

Roy Bailey

October 20, 1935 – November 20, 2018

Known for a socially aware style of folk, Londoner Roy Bailey began his career in a skiffle band in 1968. In 2000 he received an MBE, but returned it six years later in protest against British support of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. He was 83.

Scott English

January 10, 1937 – November 16, 2018

Scott English was probably best known for having written the song *Brandy*, which became a hit for Barry Manilow as *Mandy*. New Yorker English also co-wrote the Jeff Beck hit *Hi Ho Silver Lining*. English was 81 years old at the time of his passing.

Bill Caddick

June 27, 1944 – November 19, 2018

A staple of the British folk-rock scene, singer, guitarist and songwriter Bill Caddick found fame with the Albion Band and went on to form the splinter group Home Service in 1980. In later life pursued a solo career as well as running a folk club. Caddick was 74 at the time of his death.

Eddie Reeves

November 17, 1939 – November 18, 2018

Texan Eddie Reeves pursued a diverse career in music, working as a songwriter, recording artist, music publisher, artist manager, record company executive and author. His compositions were recorded by Sonny & Cher, Ray Charles and Kenny Rogers, among others. Reeves was 79 when he died due to a stroke.

Peter Simon

Died November 18, 2018

Photographer Peter Simon took some of the most iconic images of the Grateful Dead, having shot them live for the first time in 1969. The brother of the singer Carly Simon, Peter photographed many musicians and celebrities of the era. He succumbed to a fatal cardiac arrest. He was 71.

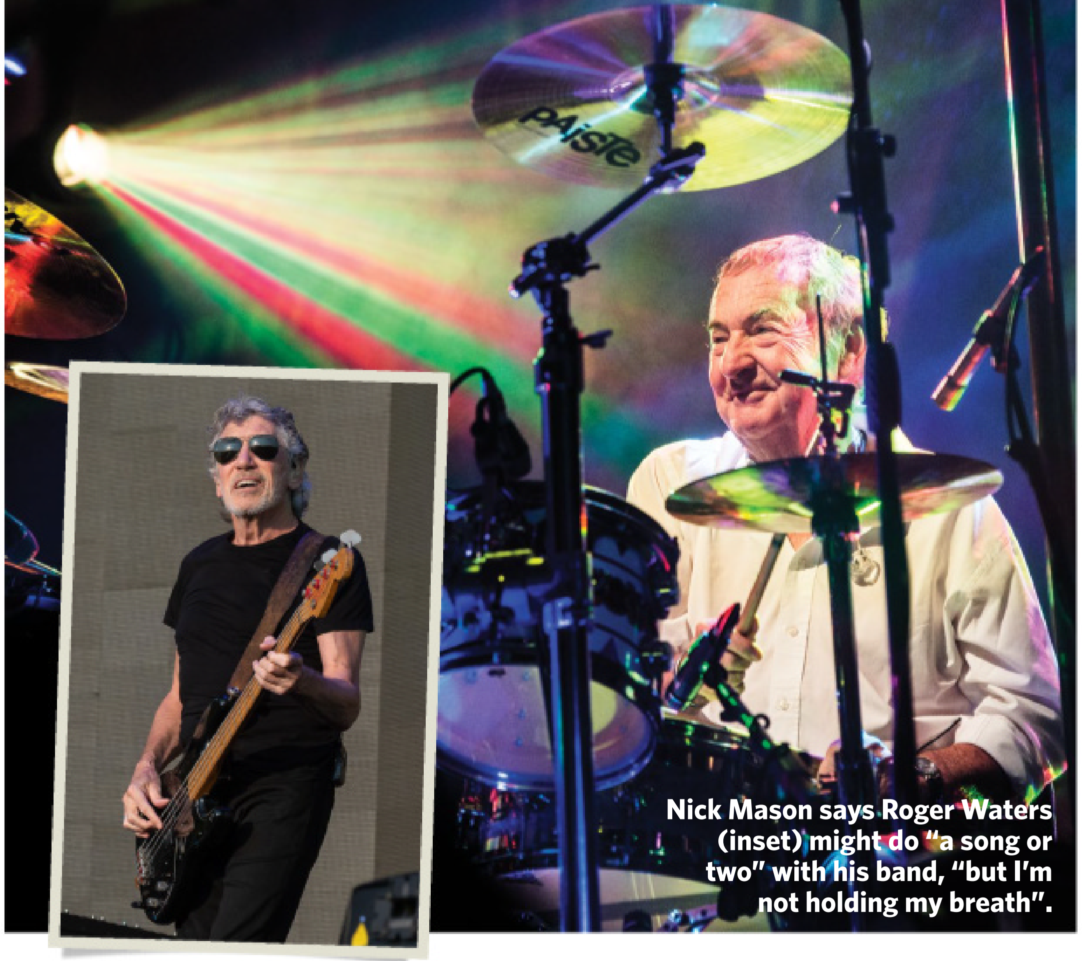
NEWS

After a year of touring together as The Devon Allman Project With Special Guest Duane Betts, the sons of Gregg Allman and Dickey Betts have formed the **Allman Betts Band**. The line-up adds Berry Oakley Jr, the son of ABB bassist Berry Oakley. Former Brothers and current Rolling Stones keyboard player Chuck Leavell is set to guest on a new Allman Betts Band album that's due in the spring.

As this issue went to press, **Styx** announced a one-off UK date. The veteran US pomp-rockers play London Palladium on June 4. It's the band's first headline show here since 2005.

Guns N' Roses were forced to abbreviate a recent set in Abu Dhabi after frontman Axl Rose (pictured) was taken "severely ill". The band carried on and managed to play for almost two hours, prompting bassist Duff McKagan to exclaim: "Axl pulled a damn miracle. The man was beyond ill. [That's something] I've never seen in my forty years of playing." McKagan recently completed a solo album with producer Shooter Jennings.

GN'R are also rumoured to have been back in the studio. Although the band are yet to comment, there have been reports that they have recorded a cover of *Children Of The Revolution* for inclusion on a T.Rex and Marc Bolan tribute album, to be released through BMG Records. The album is said to also feature U2, Elton John, Foo Fighters and Joan Jett, among others.



Nick Mason says Roger Waters (inset) might do "a song or two" with his band, "but I'm not holding my breath".

Expanded *Animals* "eventually", says Mason

And Waters "might" guest on Nick's next Saucerful tour.

Nick Mason believes that a box set celebrating Pink Floyd's 1977 album *Animals* seems likely to be released at some point in the future. The group's *The Early Years 1965-1972* box set was released in 2016, and then split into six individual volumes in March last year. Asked about the possibility of *Animals* receiving a similar release, the drummer told *Rolling Stone*: "I think it will eventually happen. It's just slow because of differences of opinion about how to do it or what to put on it, but I'm sure it will eventually happen. Of all our albums that have been re-released, that's the one that would benefit the most from a sort of reworking."

After well-received shows in 2018, Mason and his band Nick Mason's Saucerful Of Secrets have more dates lined up across the UK and North America in 2019, which will again see them revisit early Floyd material, including songs from *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn* and *A Saucerful Of Secrets*.

Asked in the same interview about any plans to perform other pre-*The Dark Side Of The Moon* songs at the shows, and specifically *Echoes*, Mason responded: "Well, the problem with *Echoes* is there was a feeling that it has so much to do with Rick Wright [Floyd's keyboard player, who died in 2008] that we wanted to steer clear of it. In the long term we might look at that, because it's a wonderful piece, an homage to Rick. It's something that we've talked about, but not personally addressed."

Mason also speculated about the possibility of Roger Waters joining Saucerful Of Secrets on stage in the future, but cautioned: "Roger says that he might come and guest for a song or two, but I'm not holding my breath on that. We can worry about guest stars when we are a bit further down the line." **DL**

Mac Court Case Over

Lindsey Buckingham says he won't "twist the knife".

Lindsey Buckingham's lawsuit with Fleetwood Mac has been settled. The guitarist/vocalist was fired last year due to a scheduling conflict revolving around a world tour. He will be replaced for the shows by Heartbreakers guitarist Mike Campbell and Crowded House leader Neil Finn.

Buckingham was sacked just days after appearing with Mac at a Grammy MusiCares event, and subsequently filed papers that claimed a lost income of up to $14 million. The band's response was terse and to the point: "Fleetwood Mac looks forward to their day in court."

Speaking on the popular US news programme *This Morning* recently, Buckingham revealed that the matter has been resolved. Asked whether the outcome was satisfactory from his point of view, he responded: "I'm happy enough with it. I'm not out there trying to twist the knife at all. I'm trying to look at this with some level of compassion and some level of wisdom."

Buckingham said he had discovered he was out of the band during a phone call with manager, Irving Azoff, who told him that Stevie Nicks hadn't been happy with him at the MusiCares event, and had accused Buckingham of smirking behind her back during her acceptance speech.

"It appeared to me that she was looking for something to hang on me in order to instigate some kind of a coup," Buckingham said. "Irving Azoff told me days later that she'd given the band an ultimatum, and either I had to go or she would." **DL**

NICK MASON: GETTY; ROGER WATERS: KEVIN NIXON; AXL: KATARINA BENZOVA/PRESS

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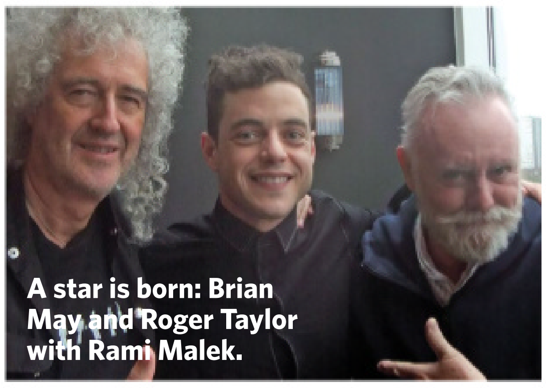
Killer Queen

Bohemian Rhapsody scoops Golden Globe nominations.

QUEEN'S *BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY* film has been nominated in two categories for 2019's prestigious Golden Globes Awards. Already acknowledged as the biggest-selling music biopic of all time, the film is in the running to win the Best Motion Picture – Drama category, while its star, the 37-year-old Rami Malek, is shortlisted for Best Performance By An Actor In A Motion Picture – Drama.

Queen guitarist Brian May believes that Ramek's performance as Freddie Mercury is deserving of an Oscar nomination, but in the Golden Globes he's up against Bradley Cooper (*A Star Is Born*), Willem Dafoe (*At Eternity's Gate*), Lucas Hedges (*Boy Erased*) and John David Washington (*BlackKKKlansman*); while *Bohemian Rhapsody* goes head-to-head with *Black Panther, BlacKKKlansman, If Beale Street Could Talk* and *A Star Is Born*. The winners will be announced on January 6.

In more awards news, Greta Van Fleet have picked up a whopping four nominations for the 61st annual Grammy Awards. The fast-rising American newcomers are nominated in the categories of Best New Artist, Best Rock Performance, Best Rock Song and Best Rock Album. Others in the running include Halestorm, the late Chris Cornell, Alice In Chains, Ghost, Buddy Guy, Weezer, Bring Me The Horizon, Trivium and Guns N' Roses. The latter's special edition of *Appetite For Destruction* is among the contenders for the Best Boxed Or Special Limited Edition Package. The winners in all categories will be announced on February 10. **DL**



A star is born: Brian May and Roger Taylor with Rami Malek.

The Dirt To Screen In March

Crüe film arriving via Netflix.

THE MUCH-ANTICIPATED Mötley Crüe film *The Dirt*, based on their 2002 book *The Dirt: Confessions Of The World's Most Notorious Rock Band* is set to arrive on March 22.

Crüe frontman Vince Neil confirmed the news on Twitter, revealing: "Wow! Just left Netflix offices. Just saw *The Dirt* movie! Fuckin' awesome! Can't wait for everyone to see it! [It's] released March 22. Yeah!"

Mötley have worked with producer Bob Rock to record four new original songs for the production, which has been a work in progress since the summer of 2016.

Directed by Jeff Tremaine, of *Jackass* fame, *The Dirt* stars Daniel Webber as Neil, Douglas Booth as bassist Nikki Sixx, Machine Gun Kelly as drummer Tommy Lee and Iwan Rheon as guitarist Mick Mars, with David Constable as Crüe manager Doc McGhee. **DL**

NEWS

The Winery Dogs, the US hard-rock power trio featuring guitarist/vocalist Richie Kotzen, bassist Billy Sheehan and drummer Mike Portnoy, will undertake a US tour in May. It's the group's first live dates in almost three years. Kotzen says: "Of course there will be a new record. I'm not going to tell you when, because I want it to be a surprise."

Guitarist Vivian Campbell says to expect changes on *II* the second record from **Last In Line**, the group formed by former members of Dio. It's the group's first release since the death of bassist Jimmy Bain, who is replaced by Phil Soussan. "Its songs are more developed, with more parts and more experimentation," explains Campbell. The album is released on February 22

A new phone app will enable fans to view hundreds of items featured in the recent **David Bowie Is** exhibition. From January 8 – on what would have been the singer's 72nd birthday – they can download the augmented reality app on iOS and Android and enjoy the vast collection from the comfort of their home. The app will also include dozens of items that were not included in the original exhibition.

In a video statement, **Saxon** (pictured) claim that on their 40th-anniversary tour this year "the band will be back with their largest, loudest, brightest, most explosive show ever." Dates are yet to be confirmed.

WELCOME BACK

Bernie Tormé

The in-demand guitarist on new music, replacing Randy Rhoads and working with big-name frontmen.

IAN GILLAN, OZZY Osbourne and Twisted Sister frontman Dee Snider have one thing in common – they've all worked with Irish born guitarist Bernie Tormé. He was a member of the most celebrated line-up of Gillan, the man Ozzy turned to when Randy Rhoads died, and a collaborator with Snider in the short lived Desperado.

But that is just part of his story. In the past four decades Tormé has been in numerous other bands – including Atomic Rooster to the Electric Gypsies – and also enjoyed a successful solo career. More recently he released the double album *Shadowland*, which combines punk, blues and metal in Tormé's inimitable style. And he's finished what he says is his final tour. So is retirement looming?

> "I would love it, but there seems to be no chance of a Gillan reunion."

Why have you decided that this is your last tour?
I've done four albums in four years, and toured them all. Honestly, I'm knackered, and need a year or two off. After that I'll think about playing live again. But I am not keen to do more club tours. It will have to be occasional shows and festival appearances. In the next couple of years I might record, so I'm not fully retiring from music.

You got fans to send in music via Pledge, which you then incorporated into the track *Innovative Jam/Chaos Theory* on your new album. How much of a challenge was that?
It was scary. I came up with the basic track, and then got nine or ten people to send me something. They all did the same part, and were each told to go mad at the end. It was three days of hell to mix, but it came out well.

You worked with your former Gillan bandmate Colin Towns on the new album. Did that throw up any idea of a Gillan reunion?
I would love it. And I think we owe it to the fans. But I doubt it will happen. I haven't talked to Ian since 1993, but have been told he's still angry and bitter about the way Gillan ended. And I know Colin is also against the idea. It has to be everyone, or it's not worth doing. So there seems to be no chance.

Looking back, how tough was it for you to step into Randy Rhoads' shoes in Ozzy's band?
I cannot explain how hard it was. It was such a sad and dark time. I knew Ozzy didn't want me there, because all he wanted to do was stop touring. Everyone was very helpful, but I was thrown into the middle of their emotional turmoil. They would look at me and were almost saying: "He's not Randy." It changed me. Before that I wanted to be a rock star, but afterwards I didn't care at all.

Do you feel that you're underrated?
That never bothers me. I'm not someone who needs that sort of attention. I care about the music, and not how highly other people rate my guitar work.

You've worked with some huge personalities. Do you feel comfortable as a foil to those kinds of people?
I'm quite a shy person, so it's been good to have someone with a huge mouth like Ozzy, Ian or Dee, because it meant I didn't need to talk. All of them are lovely people in their different ways. The person I enjoyed working with the most was Dee. What an amazing character – he is Mister Entertainment, and had so many great ideas for songs. **MD**

Shadowland is out now via PledgeMusic.

BERNIE/QUEEN: PRESS. SAXON: KEVIN NIXON

"When we played for the first time, the crowd looked like they'd just witnessed a murder."

★ HIGH HOPES

The Cold Stares

Bludgeoning their audiences, this is one alt.blues duo you can't take your eyes off.

The Cold Stares thrive on low expectations. The Indiana-based duo like nothing better than a sea of disinterested faces at their gigs, and buzz off the support slots that make lesser bands sweat. That just makes it even sweeter when Chris Tapp fires up his battery of amps, Brian Mullins takes a seat behind his monster kick drum and all hell is unleashed. "We've opened for so many big bands where people haven't come to see us," says Tapp. "And I'm proud when we get the open mouths. Our live show is brutal. When we played together for the first time, the crowd looked like they'd just witnessed a murder."

That jaw-dropping live prowess – along with songs that fuse smoky southern blues with jackhammer alt.rock – quickly elevated The Cold Stares above the pack after Tapp and Mullins formed the band in their native Kentucky.

"This band became official in 2011," recalls the frontman. "There was a contest at the Hard Rock Café. The guy running the place suckered us into doing it, and we ended up winning the damn thing. After that we were on the news and on television. So we were like: 'Shit, I guess we'd better put something together…'"

But that fantastical start was cut short.

"We had labels like Island Records and Hollywood Records flying in to see us," says Tapp, "and people interested in signing us. Then I found out I had cancer. And that knocked all that out. We had about two and a half years that we were pretty much sidetracked. But that was part of our story. And after going through chemo and radiation, and getting past it, we ended up getting another record deal and kept it going."

While writing their latest album, *Mountain*, Tapp channelled those dark times. The stormy slide-blues of *Wade In The Darkness* references his illness, while the haunted *Killing Machine* bemoans the culture of violence swallowing their nation ("It goes through different wars and the slaughter of American Indians," Tapp explains). But on the flip-side, moments like foot-down rocker *The Great Unknown* capture the rush of being young, alive and recording in Los Angeles. "Nobody ever went to LA to make a record and got a good night's sleep," Mullins offers. "That was never part of the dream."

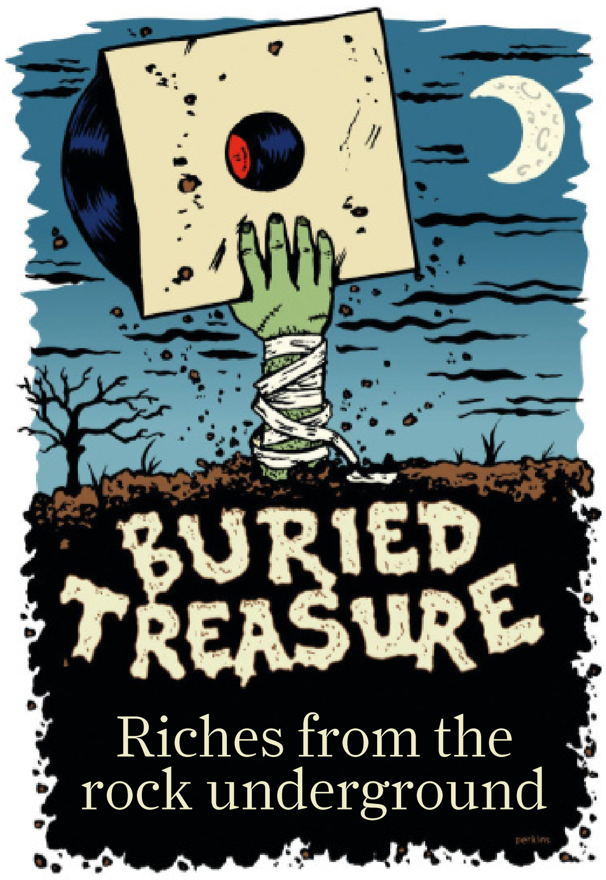
"We were out there in EastWest Studios," Tapp recalls. "We rented a Porsche and a Corvette and raced around the Hollywood Hills. After going through cancer, you want to live. And we lived. You're on this rock just a short time, and the purpose of being here is not always clear. I think you have to make every day something."

That new-found philosophy perhaps explains why The Cold Stares are sworn to ride the momentum of *Mountain* as far as it takes them. And if that means there's a little more expectation surrounding the duo, then so be it. "We gotta make a good run with this record," Tapp says. "This is the big one." **HY**

Mountain is out now via OurFans Records.

FOR FANS OF…

"We reference Sabbath and Led Zeppelin, and we're big fans of Clutch," says Tapp, "but our southern influence has probably come from The Black Crowes." Mullins: "I lean towards *The Southern Harmony And Musical Companion*. That album hit me at the right time. I was growing up a little bit musically. It had a maturity to it."



ENGLAND

England, Deroy, UK 1976. £1,000.

Deroy was a Lancashire-based recording service, enabling unsigned artists to release custom recordings to vinyl at their own expense, usually manufactured in extremely limited runs of 99 copies. Although a small label, Deroy released some of the most sought after UK recordings of the 60s and 70s.

One of their most acknowledged releases is this excellent album by London-based power-trio England. Originally formed by guitarist/vocalist Olly Alcock in the Cumbrian town of Kendall in 1971, they embarked on a life on the road. But despite building up a dedicated following, a major-label deal wasn't forthcoming.

England follows an unconventional line somewhere between early progressive hard rock and pub rock, while displaying fragments of early NWOBHM, which might have made them seem somewhat

'Somewhere between early progressive hard rock and pub rock.'

out of place at the time. But there's some fine and fluid musicianship here, particularly in Alcock's stunning guitar work. Opening track *The Osprey*, is a particular highlight, showcasing a heady blend funky hard rock with complex jazz guitar motifs, topped off with Alcock's distinctly gravelly vocals. *How Does It Feel* follows a similar path, while *Beauty & The Beast*, is an infectious prog party number, complete with sax. *Paradise Lost* is harder hitting, yet never overdoses on heaviness, much like the rest of the album.

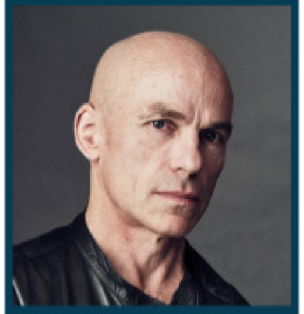
A competent and enjoyable album, which just lacks a little spark. **LD**

NEWS

Now into its twelfth year, **Record Store Day** this year takes place on Saturday, April 13. Hundreds of limited-edition vinyl releases will be created exclusively for the occasion, and free live performances and parties are set to take place in 240 independent record shops up and down the country. More at recordstoreday.co.uk

Kate Bush has had Rolf Harris's name removed from the recently remastered edition of her 2005 album *Aerial*. Kate's son, Albert 'Bertie' McIntosh, who performed Harris's spoken-word part at her live shows, is credited on the new edition. Harris was found guilty of 12 counts of sexual assault in 2014.

Following their support slots with Deep Purple, Status Quo and Thunder, **Cats In Space** release their third studio album on March 8. It includes the 27-minute conceptual epic *The Story Of Johnny Rocket*.



Marillion keyboard player Mark Kelly (pictured) suffered four broken ribs after being hit by a truck while out jogging in Germany before Christmas. The band played that night's show in Essen without Kelly, but he was back on stage with them 24 hours later.

Accept have vowed to continue "full steam ahead" despite the decision of their original bass player Peter Baltes to quit the band. "Peter needed a change in his life and we wish him all the best," said a statement.

WELCOME BACK

Electric Mary

Frontman Rusty Brown on woman trouble, exploding drummers and their studio comeback.

WHEN THEY BURST out of the Melbourne circuit in 2004 – all hooky riff-raff and bloke-next-door charm – Aussies Electric Mary seemed like a band on the up, and so it proved for three albums. But after 2011's *III* the band hit personnel bumps and fell into a studio drought, ended only by this year's thumping *Mother*. Rusty Brown gives us the real story behind their long absence.

How come we've been waiting eight years for *Mother*?
Well, between 2011 and now we've lost two drummers. They keep exploding. This album probably could have been out in the middle of 2018, but I got ill, and I had to make sure I was right to be able to finish it.

What kind of illness?
I don't want to say.

How did the recording go?
I used to write all the songs and the band would play them. But [this time], everyone had a say. Our new drummer has a lot of ideas. And that's usually the death knell for a drummer, but his ideas are pretty good, actually. All our songs have all our names on them, we don't do percentages.

Because the percentages thing kills a lot of bands, doesn't it?
Of course. Y'know, the songwriter's got a four-storey house in every country and the drummer's got a caravan.

Was *Mother* an easy album to make?
If I'm honest, everything that could go wrong has gone wrong. I possibly may have lost a friendship out of it, because in the end it was mixed by somebody else and not the guy who started doing it. It just wasn't happening in the studio. It just wasn't coming back how I thought it was sounding. Probably the blame for that lays at my feet for not being together.

What are the songs about?
Gimme Love is a strange one; I'd watched a movie about incest. *How Do You Do It*, about a guy meeting a prostitute in a bar, is total fiction. *Woman* is self-explanatory. I'm not too good with women. Lots of women in my life I haven't seen eye-to-eye with.

"We seem to attract girls that want to mother us."

Is that because the music always comes first for you?
Yeah, rock'n'roll is my girlfriend.

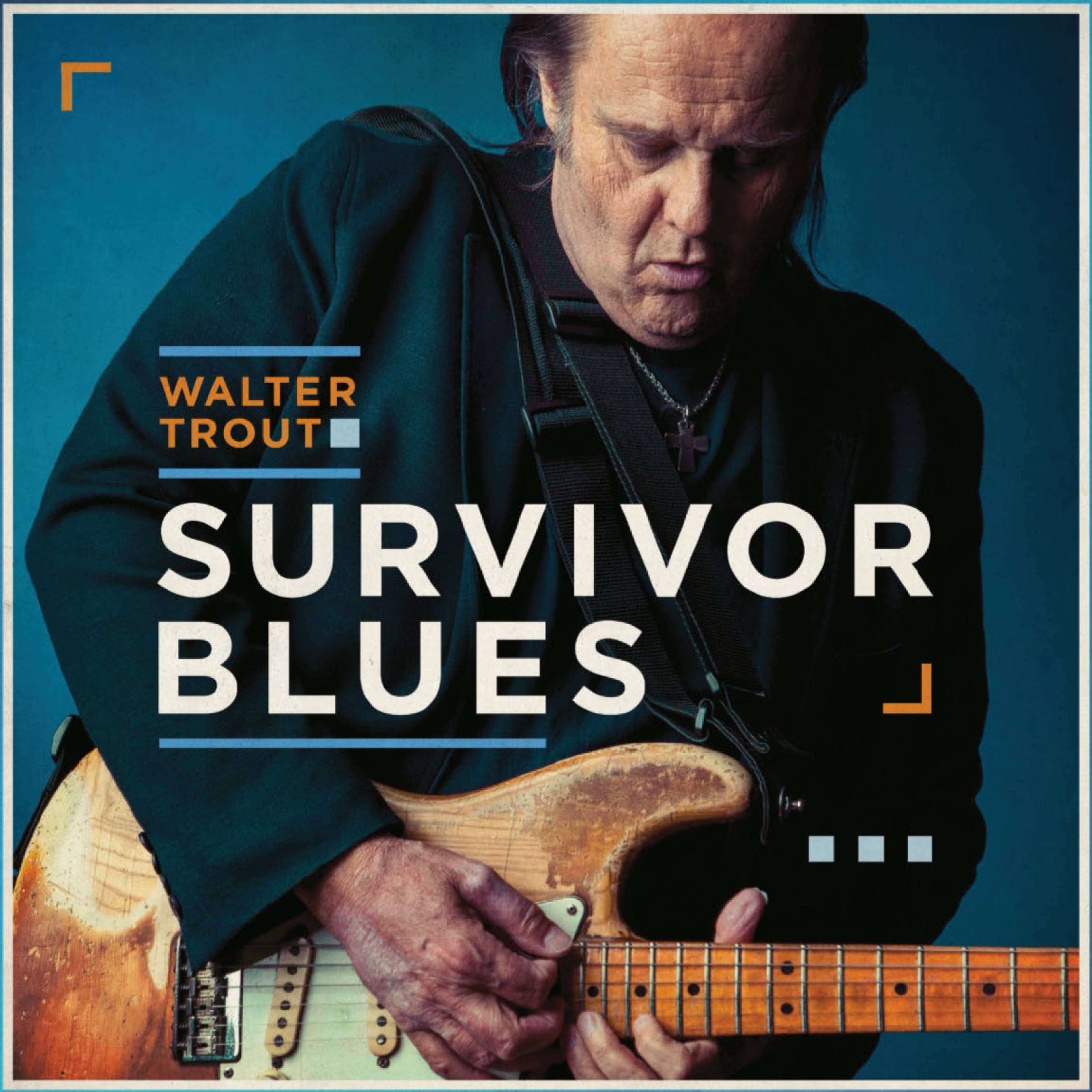
What kind of women do Electric Mary attract?
We seem to attract girls that want to mother us. When we tour Europe, there's always somebody who wants to look after us, cook us a home-cooked meal.

Are you disappointed that you don't attract strippers and hookers?
Really, to me, that's shite. There are people that still believe it. Actually, one of the bands we're friends with, I think they still believe in that – go out and get smashed and have sex with as many girls as you can.

There's a song called *Sorry Baby*. What did you do?
Well, I'm actually saying: "I'm sorry for you, because you're such an arsehole."

I interviewed you in 2011 and you said you hadn't made any money. What's the situation now?
What's ten per cent of nothing? Nah, we haven't made any money. **HY**

Mother is out on February 15 via Listenable Records.



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MY FIRST LOVE

The Beatles

WITH THE BEATLES

By Steve Lukather

The Toto guitarist relives the moment he fell for the loveable moptops.

"The album changed my life? I don't even have to think about that. It was *With The Beatles* [released in the US as *Meet The Beatles*]. That album was the 'on' switch for me, and fifty years later I'm playing in a band with Ringo Starr. It's pretty crazy.

"The music on that record touches me deeply inside, more than everything else that came after it. And the song that really did it for me as a kid was *I Saw Her Standing There*. When I heard the guitar solo, George's solo, I wanted to be that guy. When I saw The Beatles on TV, that was it. For so many people of my age, that was a game changer. There was something that resonated within me.

"I ended up working with Ringo, I worked with Paul [McCartney], and George was a friend and we played together. To know those guys and work with them is so weird, but wonderfully weird.

"When my mother was pregnant with me, this psychic friend put her hands on my mom's tummy and said: 'It's a boy. He hears the music. When he's seven years old something's gonna change. And the world is going to know who he is.' When I was seven years old, I heard The Beatles, got a guitar, it changed my life, and here I am. So that's freaky shit – I wasn't even born and it was all figured out."

NEWS

Neil Young has branded next summer's Hyde Park show with Bob Dylan a "massive fuck up", claiming that the announcement was made without his knowledge. Young's ire is rooted in a number of issues, including disapproval of the event's main sponsor. "Barclays Bank [are] a fossil fuel-funding entity [and] that doesn't work for me. Will the show go ahead with Young? Watch this space.

Megadeth release their sixteenth studio album in the spring. The band have been working hard on the follow-up to 2016's *Dystopia*, and leader Dave Mustaine says that its scheduling is "probably ninety-five per cent certain". Mustaine also reckons that the Big Four of thrash – Metallica, Megadeth, Anthrax and Slayer – should play live together once more before the latter band's retirement. "I think everyone in the metal community wants to see that," he states.

Tedeschi Trucks Band have confirmed a second night at London's Palladium. The husband-and-wife group of Derek Trucks (pictured), a former guitarist with the Allman Brothers Band, and vocalist/guitarist Susan Tedeschi now appear there on April 26 and 27.

Black Star Riders are in LA working with producer Jay Ruston on their fourth album. So far untitled, it's the band's first record with former Stone Sour member Christian Martucci, who replaces Damon Johnson on guitar.

WELCOME BACK

Franke & The Knockouts

The songwriting ace on smash hits, showbiz idiocy and Bon Jovi stealing his band.

Franke Previte never tires of discussing the globe-straddling smash that has trailed him since 1987. But to dwell on the 72-year-old's inescapable *Dirty Dancing* theme, *(I've Had) The Time Of My Life*, would be to cruelly overlook his zinging early-80s work as leader of New Jersey pop-soul-rockers, Franke & The Knockouts. A new compilation including rarities has just been released, and a dollar from each sale will go to the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network. Previte tells us about the band's rise and fall.

The Knockouts have a reputation as a 'lost' band. What happened?
We were on Millennium/RCA for our first two records, and that label really got behind us. Then we went to MCA and they said: "We're gonna make you sound like Night Ranger. We're gonna take a song off the third record, have Night Ranger's producer produce it and see what radio thinks.' So they put out a song called *Outrageous*, radio gave it the thumbs-down, so did MCA, and that was kinda it for us. It's frustrating, because you have your whole life wrapped up in your art, then all of a sudden, you find yourself selling cars out of your driveway.

> **"MCA said: 'We're gonna make you sound like Night Ranger.'"**

So what will we find on the *The Complete Collection*?
I call my songs my kids, so this collection is a chance for my kids to get out there and play. For twenty-eight bucks you can get all the records, eleven unreleased songs, plus six live tracks. To me, those were my favourite versions of the Knockouts songs, because they just kick ass more. The energy of ten thousand people cheering for you gives you a different energy than standing there in a fishbowl, recording.

Did you cross paths with Bon Jovi on the New Jersey circuit?
Jon used to follow our band around. Y'know, he'd come up afterwards and say: "Oh, you're my favourite singer." Many years later, I was having dinner in Asbury Park and this guy comes up and says: "Hey Franke, how are ya? I was the original road manager for Jon Bon Jovi. You know why we followed you around?" I thought he was gonna say: "Because we loved the band." He goes: "We were trying to steal Tico Torres [drummer]." So Tico joined Bon Jovi and the rest is history. But both of our paths ended up okay, because two years later this guy called me to write *(I've Had) The Time Of My Life*.

Is it flattering or annoying when journalists still ask about that song?
Winning an Academy Award, a Golden Globe, ASCAP song of the year, a Grammy nomination… it's beyond my frickin' dreams as a songwriter. I got to hang with [*Dirty Dancing* star] Patrick Swayze at the Academy Awards and he told me: "We were getting ready to do that last scene to a Lionel Richie track, but the last cassette came in and it was you. We knew then that we were gonna make a great movie."

Swayze died of pancreatic cancer in 2009. Is that why you're donating to that charity?
I've been selling demos on my Facebook page for ten years, and I've raised about thirty thousand dollars for the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network. So I thought here's another great opportunity with me putting out this collection. If you want to not buy my record, it's cool, but just donate to them, that's even better. **HY**

The Complete Collection is out now via Friday Music. Donate at pancan.org

JOBY SESSIONS/GUITARIST MAGAZINE; TRUCKS: KEVIN NIXON/GUITARIST MAGAZINE

★ HIGH HOPES

Puppy

The hard-hitting rock trio on DIY ethics, the joys of 90s rock and avoiding mine shafts.

Some people will do anything for their art. Which is why London-based three-piece Puppy found themselves spending an exhausting day lugging an entire camera rig and back line up and down a mine shaft while making a DIY video for their song *Beast*, all in the name of creative control.

"We're control freaks," explains singer/guitarist Jock Norton. "It was one of the worst days of our lives, but then we saw the video back and we were glad we did it. But we've decided to stay out of mine shafts for the rest of our musical career. That was our drummer Billy's idea. We didn't talk to him for a couple of days after it. We've always been in our own little world and done everything for ourselves, so when we signed with Spinefarm we were keen to keep up with that, because we know we'll get something we like at the end of the day."

It's a love of the Beastie Boys and a childhood spent obsessively watching music videos on MTV that's inspired their visual side, but the musical touchstones are clearly signposted too. Puppy – completed by drummer Billy Howard and bassist Will Michael – have a magpie's eye for treasure and an infectious sense of fun, which come together in their debut full-length album *The Goat*, an unlikely but winning combination of grunge melodies, power-pop choruses and metal riffs. With nods to Weezer, Pantera, Helmet, Foo Fighters and a whole lot more besides, it feels like it's travelled through time from the height of the 90s.

"Will's brother is about ten years older than him, and he was constantly passing him cassettes of grunge music," says Norton. "The nineties was a really experimental time in mainstream rock. Me and Billy were in more indie-leaning bands beforehand. We loved how an indie band like Pavement can have a bit of humour in there, or Weezer having weird doo-wop breakdowns in their songs. It's a really fine line, not being jokey but also not po-faced serious. Musically we're trying to be quite broad."

With Michael joining old school friends Norton and Howard three years ago after an apprenticeship in doom and stoner bands, Puppy represented their chance to break free of restrictions, deliberately, determinedly and joyfully failing to fit in with any current scene, which means they've been able to tour with bands as diverse as Kvelertak, King 810 and CKY.

"We lost any desire to fit in anywhere musically," says Norton. "Our big goal was to just to keep pushing ourselves. And there were times when we'd go: 'This is a bit mental, it doesn't really make sense.' But it's cool that we're in relatively unchartered territory here. It makes it really fun, and being your own compass to what's good and what's not, it's a lot more rewarding."

They say that every dog has its day, and Puppy's may well have arrived. **EJ**

The Goat is out on January 25 via Spinefarm Records.

FOR FANS OF...

"When I was sixteen or seventeen I had listened exclusively to heavy classic rock, stuff like AC/DC and Guns N' Roses. Then I heard the Blue Album and listened to the lyrics, and I realised you don't have to pretend to be a tough dude all the time, you can embrace this goofy side and make it really cool. It changed my life."

"We lost any desire to fit in anywhere musically. We just kept pushing ourselves."

MC5

Kick Out The Jams

The title track of the band's live debut album which captured the band at their most inspired and inspiring, it was the incendiary call to arms that originally ignited punk's vital spark in 60s Detroit.

Words: **Ian Fortnam**

THE MOTOWN CITY FIVE
One irresistible facet of the MC5's live show was that they ramped up the energy with choreographed, showband stage moves that were intrinsically Detroit, and very Motown:
"We loved Motown [Four Tops pictured]," says Wayne Kramer. "I come from an era before the British invasion, and in that era the cool bands did dance steps, and the cooler your steps, the cooler your band. Spins, leaps and getting up and dancing on your amplifiers, very much like Motown artists, but with electric guitars. The first time I saw The Beatles I thought: 'They ain't even doing any steps, and they're so old.'"

Detroit's Motor City 5 were a force of nature. An explosive collision of high-energy rock'n'roll, psychedelically inclined free jazz, radical left-wing politics, soul-driven R&B showband steps, acid-expanded consciousness and revolution-sparking raw power.

Having ripped through the Detroit live scene like wildfire, the band released a pair of independent singles across a two-year period (*I Can Only Give You Everything* b/w *One Of The Guys, Looking At You* b/w *Borderline*) through Trans Love Energies on AMG and A-Square respectively. Repeat pressings and a burgeoning reputation for live shows that combined the spiritual with the seditious soon attracted Elektra Records, who signed the band in '68.

But the 5's essential magic wasn't best served within the cold confinement of a recording studio, as guitarist Wayne Kramer explains: "Playing live was what we did best. Most bands did three albums and then a live album, so we thought we'd be revolutionary and break out with a live album first. It also worked better for the label. MC5 didn't know how to work in the studio, so a studio record could have cost Elektra a fortune and been a lengthy, gruelling process."

Consequently, the *Kick Out The Jams* album was recorded live at Detroit's Grande Ballroom across two nights on October 30 and 31, 1968 and captured the band at their most inspired and inspiring. From Brother JC Crawford's rabble-rousing opening 'testimonial' rap, through the libertine excesses of *Come Together*, the proto-punk ack-ack assault of *Rocket Reducer No.62* and the taut, zeitgeist-mirroring passion of *Motor City Is Burning* to the spiralling space-rock blaze of *Starship* (co-credited to Sun Ra), it delivers sweat, volume and passion in spades, but is probably best remembered for its notorious title track with its unforgettably controversial introductory exhortation to "Kick out the jams, motherfuckers!"

Before we deal with the repercussions of Motherfuckergate, which we surely must, let's examine the story behind the song behind the profanity. At this point in time every one of the band's original compositions was simply credited to 'MC5', but who actually wrote it?

"We were commune-ists," Kramer says laughing. "We had this all-for-one, one-for-all… I hesitate to call it a business structure. We just saw ourselves as one unit, but it was [vocalist and lyricist] Rob Tyner and I that wrote *Kick Out The Jams* in the kitchen, smoking a joint."

KOTJ still sounds like a statement of intent. A forthright four-word manifesto, hammered home with an attention-grabbing, exclamatory 'motherfucker'.

"Tyner was really speaking to us, the rest of the band. Sometimes I was critical of him, and what he's saying is: 'Let me be who I am.' Because who he was was fantastic. He was your dream lead singer, and he wrote lyrics that work so well, on so many levels. What do we mean when we say 'Kick out the jams'? If you're going to do anything, do it full measure, don't equivocate, be all the way in."

On another level, *KOTJ* is an entirely punk statement. Possibly the first. Eight years prior to the Sex Pistols, here was an exhortation to set aside complacent noodling for short, sharp shocks. To quite literally kick out 'the jams', of which there were plenty in the MC5's contemporaneous late-60s music scene, not least from the Grateful Dead.

"They were the recipients of much of our harassment," Kramer says. "All those San Francisco bands, we were tough on everybody. This was the era of the twenty-minute guitar solo, the forty-minute drum solo. The MC5's roots are in Little Richard and Chuck Berry. That's where we were based and everything grew out from there, and we went from Little Richard to Sun Ra, all wrapped up in the era of Vietnam, civil rights and youth rebellion."

And so to the 'motherfucker' of the matter. It was certainly a noun that provoked a reaction. So how quickly did the situation escalate from offended Elektra executives to the MC5 being dropped by the label?

"In the blink of an eye." says Kramer. "We knew 'Kick out the jams, motherfucker' was never going to get played on the radio, so we recorded a 'Kick out the jams, brothers and sisters' version for the single. We instructed Elektra to wait until it peaked in the chart before releasing the album. Because when the album's released the shit's gonna hit the fan, but we'll have won already by having a hit single. Well, once they saw the single taking off they rushed the album out. And when kids came home with this record and mom and dad heard 'motherfucker', you could hear the outrage reverberate across America.

"Elektra asked us, could they put out a clean version of the album. We said no and they did it anyway. We'd already had a major disruption in our relationship, and then, because our contract said we had control of our advertising, and a local store refused to carry our records and we called them on it in very graphic street language and sent Elektra the bill [Detroit's Hudson's department store refused to stock MC5 product so the band ran a full page ad in a local underground paper that read simply 'Fuck Hudson's' and included, without permission, Elektra's logo]. That was the final straw and Elektra fired us."

The 5 subsequently signed to Atlantic and made yet more history, but even now, 50 years on, *Kick Out The Jams* retains its vital intensity.

"I never tire of playing it." Kramer enthuses. "It's exciting every time. Even acoustic. Excitement's built into the song's DNA. There's no way to play that song and be boring. It can't be done."

"It's exciting every time. Even acoustic. Excitement's built into the song's DNA. There's no way to play that song and be boring."

GETTY x2

THE FACTS

RELEASE DATE
1969

HIGHEST CHART POSITION
US No.30

PERSONNEL
Rob Tyner
Vocals
Wayne Kramer
Fender Guitar
Fred 'Sonic' Smith
Mosrite guitar
Michael Davis
Fender bass
Dennis Thompson
Drums

WRITTEN BY
MC5

PRODUCED BY
Jac Holzman and Bruce Botnick

LABEL
Elektra

Kicking out the jams: (l-r) Michael Davis, Dennis 'Machinegun' Thompson, Wayne Kramer, Fred 'Sonic' Smith, Rob Tyner (front).

Q&A

Steve Morse

Deep Purple's current guitarist on Blackmore's blessing, dealing with the haters and why guitar is the best therapy.

Words: **Henry Yates**

They call him the hardest-working guitarist in rock, and he has the résumé to back up the title. Raised in Georgia, guitarist Steve Morse made his first blip on the music radar with genre-mangling fusioneers Dixie Dregs back in the 70s, and after that he bolstered the re-formed Kansas in the 80s. Then in 1994 he became the guitarist in Deep Purple, with whom he has so far played on six studio albums, from 1996's *Purpendicular* to 2017's *Infinite*, and seven live albums. While doing all that he has still managed to pop out to play with artists ranging from Luciano Pavarotti to Flying Colors. "To me," the 64-year-old says, "the guy in the mirror looks like he's been around the block."

Let's go back to the late sixties. Who were the guitarists on your bedroom wall?

Well, a lot of them were British. The Beatles, John and George, The Kinks, Rolling Stones, Yardbirds – there is no bad solo there. I remember when The Who came to town, and I sat right in front of Pete Townshend at this little teen club, and just loved the control he had over the guitar. It blossomed, of course, into Led Zeppelin, Page, Hendrix, Jeff Beck, Clapton with Cream. I got to see Led Zeppelin at a pop festival around the time of Woodstock, doing the thing with the violin bow and the Echoplex. I remember dehydration and the sun beating down, but the music was so awesome.

Were you the classic guitar-obsessed teenager?

I'd practise several hours a day. It was just as much fun as doing a wheelie on my bicycle. I wasn't smart enough to realise that you needed to sleep. I'd wake up super-early to practise before school; I did my homework on the bus. I finally got kicked out of school because I was constantly trying different things with my hair. I have fairly thin hair, and it seemed like every British rock star had the thickest hair known to man. I came from a different stock, I guess. They were always kicking me out: "You better cut your hair before you come back to this school!" Finally, when I reached the age of sixteen, they did it one time too many: "Alright, I won't come back."

Playing guitar is supposed to make you popular with girls. Was that your experience?

No, girls liked the sports guys more. But the motivator was never trying to be something for women. And then playing in a fusion-type instrumental band like Dixie Dregs, you get a lot of women that wear black T-shirts and look like guys. I'm joking – of course, women hated it. But it was like making a model rocket as a kid, y'know – this controlled explosion. It was demanding for a young guitar player. But for me the challenge was part of the deal. I see these advertisements on TV now for BattleBots, and Dixie Dregs was something like that. You could get into it as deep as you wanted to, intellectually. But also there was something primal about it.

Do you think your guitar solos reflect your personality?

Yeah. Which sometimes led to the guys in the Dregs saying: "Wow, I really liked your playing last night, you seemed really pissed off." Because I'd attack the guitar more if something was not going well. The fact that you can attack a guitar was a big appeal for me, y'know, getting intensely into the guitar as a teenager.

Has playing guitar prevented you from having to pay for a shrink, then?

Well, touring gets you ready for a shrink, your bandmates act as the shrink.

How did it feel to step into Ritchie Blackmore's shoes when you joined Deep Purple?

By the time I got there the ice was sorta broken, because Ritchie had left the band and Joe Satriani had done such a great job covering that. Also, I had been part of the reunited Kansas, when people mistakenly thought I was trying to replace Kerry Livgren – which I wasn't – so I was used to the mixed emotions of the audience. Y'know, they're glad to see the band again… but they wish it was the original guys. Every once in a while, people will be throwing stuff at you – I mean literally throwing stuff at you. For some reason those people stand out more in your memory. I've never met Ritchie, but in the press, his posture was: 'Good luck'. It is a signal to the trolls if somebody says: "They suck with this new guy." He didn't do that. I think he made it possible for the band's success. It's been a pretty easy ride, but of course there's a certain percentage of people that just hate me because of who I am.

You're just about to play with Deep Purple in Montreux, the town where there was the fire that inspired *Smoke On The Water*. How does it feel to play that riff on stage?

It's like if somebody handed you a remote control that you didn't design or build. But still, a remote control that says: 'Push This', and then when you did the entire place would cheer and billions of cell phones would come out. It's kinda fun. But I'm acutely aware of the fact that I didn't write it. So don't worry, anybody, if any of those people are reading right now.

What's the most you've ever spent on a guitar?

Maybe a thousand bucks. I can get guitars free now, but when I get one I can't really sell it. I can't ever get rid of it. So it's sorta like taking in a pet – you gotta be responsible for it. It needs to be in an air-conditioned space. And you really need to play it, otherwise you're just hoarding.

Last time we spoke you said your right hand was breaking down. How is it now?

Well, it's still talkin' to me. It's arthritis in the joint. So the less I move, the better it is. When I practise it's no fun. Then at the gig I take everything that's legal, and apply everything that's legal to the joint. That and adrenalin gets you through. Then it hurts the rest of the night. At the gig it doesn't play on my mind, but it's always there.

Remastered special editions of Deep Purple In Rock and Fireball are out now, on purple vinyl, via Rhino.

"A certain percentage of people just hate me because of who I am."

"Maybe we're introducing a new generation of rock'n'roll"

From out of nowhere and suddenly the most talked-about new guitar band around, **Greta Van Fleet** might take inspiration from the past, but they're poised to take the baton from the old guard of rock greats and carry it into the future.

Words: **Dave Everley** Photos: **Doug Coombe**

Ask Greta Van Fleet guitarist Jake Kiszka for one specific memory he'd take away from 2018, and he doesn't spend long thinking about it. It happened back in July, when the young Michigan band were playing at the Quebec City Summer Festival as main support for the Foo Fighters. The huge crowd had put up with light rain throughout the day, but during Greta Van Fleet's set the heavens suddenly opened and it began to pour down. That's when Kiszka stepped forward to take an old-school solo.

"I just went down on the deck in the rain and started playing," says the 22-year-old Kiszka, whose flamboyant, axe-behind-the-head style evokes the great showmen of the past. "There were literally, like, a hundred thousand people there and it just went crazy. It really felt like it struck a deep chord with these people. It was a really visceral reaction."

That might not seem remarkable, until you consider two things. Firstly, Greta Van Fleet were still three months away from releasing their debut album. That a band who should have still been taking baby steps at that point in their career could draw in so many people indicates just how fast and vertiginous their rise has been. Secondly, and more importantly, that kind of thing isn't supposed to happen any more. The gatekeepers of cool have deemed that rock'n'roll is a spent force, a once noble beast expending its final pained gasps well away from the concerns of popular culture. And given the scarcity of traditional rock bands who have made any imprint outside the boundaries of their insular scene in recent years, you can see their point.

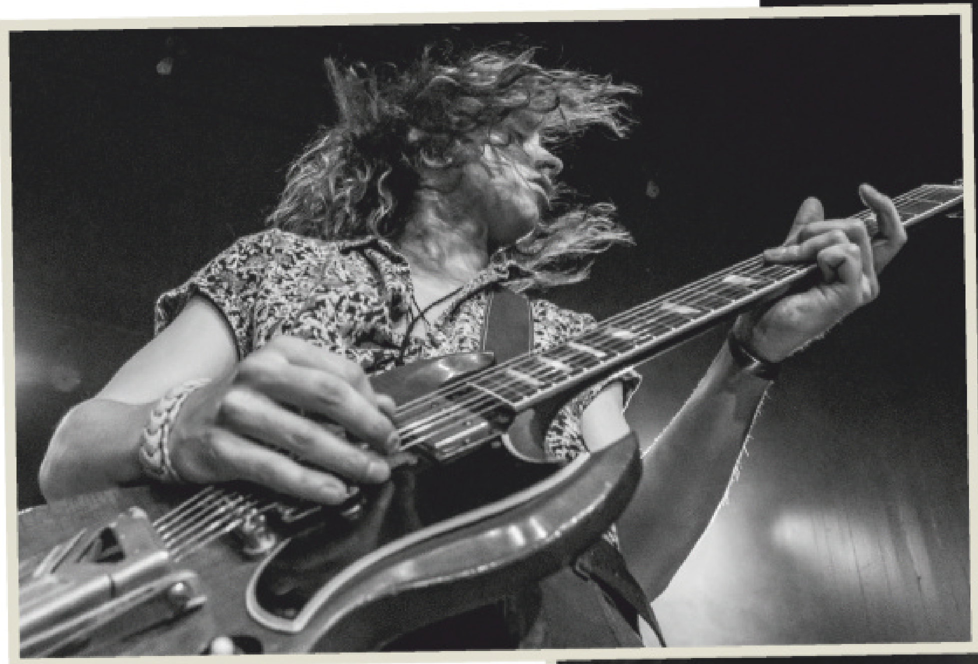
But Greta Van Fleet are disproving that theory. Whether by accident or design, they've tapped into a current of musical populism that has been buried deep for a long time. Few will argue with the notion that they are a band out of time, but right now it feels like they're ahead of the curve rather than behind it.

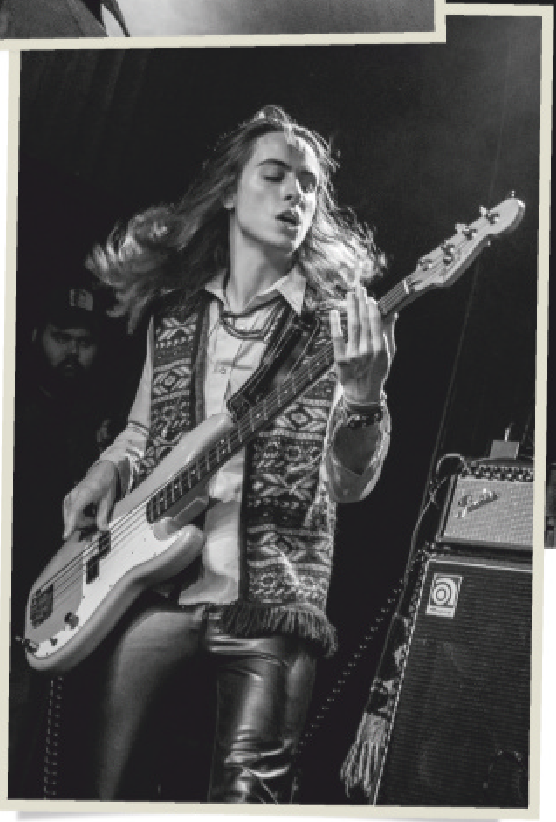
"It was only a couple of days ago that I had a realistation that this is significant, what we're doing here," says Josh Kiszka, Great Van Fleet's singer and Jake's twin brother.

Significant how?

"In that maybe we're introducing a new generation of rock'n'roll," he replies. "Which I wasn't ever convinced of being the case before." ⊳

BLETCHLEY
BLETCHLEY





Josh Kiszka points the way: given the strength of GVF's live shows, the only way is up.

"Introducing a new generation of rock'n'roll" is a hell of a pitch, but Greta Van Fleet can make a legitimate claim to it. In less than 18 months they've become the most talked-about new guitar band around. Their 2018 debut album, *Anthem Of The Peaceful Army*, was an out-of-the-gate success on both sides of the Atlantic, while their live shows generate a communal exhilaration from audiences who have been waiting years for an experience this unifying.

No one expected Greta Van Fleet to become quite this big quite so quickly, least of all Greta Van Fleet themselves. Still, they're just about acclimatising.

"It happened faster than anyone expected," says Sam Kiszka, bassist and younger brother of Josh and Jake by three years. "It keeps catching me off guard. But it really goes to show that people are ready for a resurgence in rock music."

Classic Rock spoke to the three Kiszka brothers and non-sibling drummer Danny Wagner separately by phone over the space of two days. It's difficult to tell exactly what they're like without being in a room with them, but first impressions are that Josh is eloquent and decisive, Jake quiet and intense, and Sam garrulous and open, while if Wagner is cowed by being in a band with three brothers, and all the familial baggage that brings, he hides it well.

"I always wanted to put together a band," says Jake, who says he first picked up a guitar, one of his father's, at the age of three and has been inseparable from the instrument ever since, "but I never figured it would be with my brothers."

The Kiszkas and Wagner grew up in Frankenmuth, Michigan, a quiet town (population: 4,944) a couple of hours' drive north of Detroit. The town was founded by German settlers; today it proudly bears the nickname 'Michigan's Little Bavaria' and is home to the world's largest Christmas store. The brothers' childhood was the same as many middle-class kids in rural America. When they weren't in school, they'd be outside, camping in the woods and building rafts on the river; Huckleberry Finn stuff.

But there were less conventional elements to their upbringing too. Their father, Kelly, has a bachelor's degree in philosophy, and the Kiszkas were schooled early on in the subject. The house was filled with books, and dinner would be soundtracked with what Josh describes as "deep philosophical conversations" over the gravy boat.

"But there were things he'd warn us to be careful with: 'You don't want to get too far into this or that,'" he says. "Nietzsche was one of them. He wouldn't let us read certain texts at all."

Instead the young Josh gravitated towards the likes of Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson, the so-called Transcendentalists – men who sought solitude and independence in nature. "That stuff is about individuality, which I think is the pulse of mankind," says Josh. "When you strip man of his independence and individuality, you kill peace."

'Their live shows generate exhilaration from audiences who have been waiting years for an experience this unifying.'

If this sounds like hippie talk, well, that's because it is. The singer doesn't baulk at the description. At one point he calls Greta Van Fleet "a movement – a peaceful reaction to tyranny, to oppression and classicism and racism. There's no room for that in this world." Laugh at the earnestness if you want, but it's difficult to argue with the sentiment.

How do you square that world view with being in a rock'n'roll band in 2019?

Josh: "There's a challenge behind it that's part of what makes it so enjoyable. It's not that we ever set out to be famous or rich or whatever the hell – none of that stuff really mattered to us. What we wanted to do was write music that we wanted to hear and put it out in the world. Share ideas and spread the message of love and peace and unity."

The last time Greta Van Fleet were in London, in November 2018, they dropped by the Black Heart, a charmingly scuzzy rock boozer in a Camden Town side street. The place holds good memories for the band: in September 2017 they played their first UK show there, in the pub's 150-capacity upstairs room. "We were still loading our own stuff in," says Danny Wagner. "I think I carried every piece of my kit up those stairs. We had so much adrenaline going. I think we got to meet everyone after that show."

Fourteen months on, they were playing a much bigger venue, the 2,300-capacity Kentish Town Forum a mile up the road – and not just one night, but three. That's going from playing to 150 people to close to 9,000 in just over a year.

If you've encountered Greta Van Fleet only on the back of their recent success, you'd be forgiven for thinking they're an overnight sensation. But YouTube says otherwise. A quick search using the keywords 'Greta Van Fleet Frankenmuth' throws up a video dated September 17, 2012. It shows the band playing a cover of Ozzy Osbourne's *Crazy Train* on an outdoor stage at what appears to be a town fair. If that wasn't Greta Van Fleet's very first gig, it was close. You'd never guess it was them if you didn't already know: Jake and Sam have short hair, Josh has the sort of chin-length curtain coiffure beloved of teens the world over and a voice a good octave lower than his current banshee wail; original drummer Kyle Hauck is behind the kit.

It's by no means a star-making performance, but the nascent group still sound remarkably confident

Socks with sandals? Well there had to be a chink in their armour somewhere.

for a bunch of musicians barely halfway through their teens.

This would be Greta Van Fleet's life for the next few years. They'd grab gigs wherever they could, playing places with names like Jan's Bar And Grill or Cork Pine Eatery or White's Bar in Saginaw, Michigan. They would finish school on a Friday, spend the weekend playing five-hour stints, then go back to class on Monday, ears still ringing.

At first their set-lists were made up of covers of songs they'd learned from their dad's record collection – Cream, Zeppelin, Bad Company, old blues numbers – but they were gradually replaced by the band's own material. Jake pinpoints one song, *Highway Tune*, as the very first thing the Kiszkas wrote together, when he and Josh were 17. "That was really the beginning of Greta Van Fleet to me," he says now. *Highway Tune* is currently the most popular Greta Van Fleet song on Spotify, with 36 million plays. Talk about hitting it out of the park first time.

What was the music scene like in Frankenmuth when you formed the band?

Sam: "There was no music scene. The only live music was, like, polka bands. We didn't really have anything to work with in that respect. We just had each other. And we looked up to the music we listened to and we wanted to make."

Which was the most memorable gig you played in the early days?

Jake: "We used to play for a few biker gangs in Michigan – backwoods camps that they would have set up. We'd drive two or three hours north, set up a small stage or a trailer, then hook into a generator and play for three hours. A lot of stuff that you see at that age wasn't normal – they'd be firing off guns in the air and taking all kinds of drugs and were belligerent.

Sounds scary.

Jake: "It was kind of scary. But once you got up and started playing there seemed to be some kind of respect for the band. I think if we'd have been terrible they'd have rioted. We definitely gained respect for that level of musicianship."

It sounds like you existed in isolation. Did that spur you on?

Josh: "When you're on your own you've got to create your own kingdom and play in it. And that was the ground work for what this became."

Jason Flom is the founder and CEO of Greta Van Fleet's label, Lava Records, and a genuine music industry power player. During his 40-year career he's helped break artists ranging from Skid Row and Stone Temple Pilots to Katy Perry and Paramore. Flom knows the exact moment that he first heard Greta Van Fleet: 4.43pm, November 11, 2016. He knows this because on his phone he still has the time-stamped email sent by a colleague. The subject matter said 'GVF', and the email contained a link to *Highway Tune* and a message urging him to check it out.

"I remember, I was sitting with my son, and I put it on and was like, 'What in the hell is this?" he says. "This is insane. I haven't heard that sound since back in the day. It was an instant reaction."

Flom called Greta Van Fleet direct to tell them he wanted to sign them – unseen. The band were astounded; their manager had only sent out the song four days before. This kind of thing rarely happens in the music industry. It certainly never happens when the band in question is made up of a bunch of scrawny kids in vintage clothes playing undiluted rock'n'roll this far into the 20th century.

"A number of things grabbed me," says Flom. "First, his voice. It's not from a different era, but from a different planet. And something about the way they create music together, which I realise is because they've been playing together since they were little. And then there's the fact that they were so young. These guys are kids – they were still in high school. It was almost incongruous."

> **'There's no escaping the similarities to Zeppelin in general and, in Josh Kiszka's case, Robert Plant specifically.'**

Flom's instincts were on the money. A few influential blogs began writing about the band, then *Highway Tune* was picked up by American DJ Howard Stern. "Then the record just exploded on the charts," says Flom.

He puts the band's booming success down to old-fashioned word of mouth. "Rock fans don't generally stream. They're buying a lot of albums, CDs. Everybody's telling everyone else about it. It sounds like a cliché, but it's been so organic."

Whatever the reason, it worked. When it was released in October 2018, *Anthem Of The Peaceful Army* entered the US *Billboard* chart at No.3 and the UK album chart at No.12. The band's detractors – more on them in a second – will say that their success was a shoe-in, that the formula goes: 'young kids + familiar sound + major-label muscle = $$$$'. And maybe that's possible. But if it was that easy, why isn't everybody doing it?

Do you ever think: "Out of all the bands out there, at a time like this, why us?"

Jake: "No. I haven't asked. But I would say it's because we're a bunch of kids who play rock'n'roll, who were inspired to be the greatest musicians they can be. Maybe that was enough."

How do you think you've become so successful?

Danny: "It's intensive word of mouth. Which is a rare thing nowadays. It's people interacting with each other. And we get to interact with them." ▷

Sitting pretty and with a whole lotta potential: Josh Kiszka, Danny Wagner, Sam Kiszka, Jake Kiszka.

"What in the hell is this? This is insane, I haven't heard that sound since back in the day."

Lava Records CEO Jason Flom when he first heard GVF

Does it feel like you're successful because you're so against the grain, at least compared to everything else in the charts these days?

Jake: "Yeah, I think it does. There's something really inspiring about the fact that it's not necessarily like anything else. Maybe people are shying away from it because of what people might say – almost an element of fear, because of the context. But this is the music we grew up with, it's ingrained in us. We'd have to go out of our way to sound differently to the way we do now."

During their 18 months in the spotlight, Greta Van Fleet have amassed a sizable following. Slash is among the musicians who have sung their praises, albeit with a caveat: "I wish they didn't sound so much like Led Zeppelin," he said, "but still, the idea of fuckin' four kids getting on stage and just playing their fuckin' asses off… I think that's inspiring."

Elton John was unequivocal in his praise. The Rocket Man turned up at one of the band's shows at London's 1,000-capacity Islington Academy in April 2018, and invited them to play at his annual Oscars party a few months later (he advised them to "flaunt it" more). And then there are the several hundred thousand people who have bought *Anthem Of The Peaceful Army*. And the 36 million who have streamed *Highway Tune*… (Not to mention the other 150 million plus who have streamed the band on YouTube and Spotify.)

Inevitably, there's a smaller but more vocal group of haters, who have crucified the band for everything from lack of originality to gaucheness to being complicit corporate playthings. "They are a new kind of vampiric band who's there to catch the runoff of original classic rock using streaming services' data-driven business model," read influential music website Pitchfork's scathing review of *Anthem Of The Peaceful Army*.

In truth, Greta Van Fleet leave themselves open to that kind of attack from all sides. They aren't original; there's no escaping the similarities to Led Zeppelin in general and, in Josh Kizska's case, Robert Plant specifically (something Plant himself has acknowledged wryly). They are guilty of gaucheness – claiming that, no, Zeppelin aren't a huge influence. And expecting people to believe that definitely qualifies as naïve. Complicit corporate playthings? Might be true, might not. How many people who aren't underground rock fundamentalists or music journalists really give a shit anyway?

Still, the band themselves are impressively sanguine about all the negativity. "It's unfortunate that they go out of their way to put that kind of energy out," Josh says with an shrug, "but that's their prerogative."

How does it feel when you're criticised like that?

Jake: "It's strangely reassuring. As much as some people admire what you're doing, there'll always been a counterpoint to that, there'll always be someone who hates what you do. And I think that's a beautiful thing. It's not really art if you're not pissing anyone off."

Come on, you're just saying that. It must hurt. Or at least piss you off.

Jake: "No. I don't think it's pissed any of us off. We've never had a conversation where we're irritated by what someone's written or said or how someone feels."

One thing your detractors say is that you're not bringing anything new to the table. Are you?

Jake: "I think so, yes. It would be a puzzling thing to identify ourselves as a throwback band, because we're a product of *our* generation. The music that was written during the cultural revolution – the building blocks of the genre itself – we're maybe broadcasters of that. But we're broadcasting it for our generation. We're picking up where those bands left off and moving forward with it."

If there's a secret to Greta Van Fleet's success, then that's it right there. Granted, the fact that they're trading in familiar musical currencies helps, and, naturally, the backing of a huge label doesn't hurt. But they're offering something that's both pure in intent and exhilarating in delivery. Because let's face it, if it wasn't, then Greta Van Fleet would still be stuck in White's Bar, Saginaw, Michigan, and we wouldn't be having this conversation now.

"There hasn't been a real breakout rock band – rock with a capital 'R' – in quite some time," says Jason Flom. "The ones who have made a dent have been hybrids of different sounds. With Greta Van Fleet it's just a bunch of guys with guitars and bass and drums; no synthesisers, no DJs. It's pure."

Greta Van Fleet are being called the saviours of rock.

Josh: Well, that's what they're saying.

Is that a heavy burden to shoulder?

Josh: "Yes it is. But somebody's got to do it. If we've been given an opportunity, I don't see why we wouldn't take it. We're just as sick of manufactured bullshit as everybody. We want to hear real music. Maybe we can inspire enough people to pick up real instruments and make real music from a real place."

And are you rising to that challenge?

Josh: [Emphatically] "Yes."

By the time you read this, Greta Van Fleet will be thinking about what comes next. Not just the next single or the next round of arena dates that are being booked for 2019, or the festival headlining slot that is inevitable only a couple of years from now, but how they can change and adapt and grow without sacrificing what they've built so far. Jake talks about immersing himself in movie soundtracks; his twin brother has been listening to music from around the world.

"I like to think that we're wielding a different torch, offering something different to what others have to offer at this time," says Josh. "I feel at this point that we're the right people to be doing it.

Introducing a new generation of rock'n'roll – it's is a dirty job, but someone's got to do it.

Anthem Of The Peaceful Army is out now via Virgin EMI/Lava Records. GVF tour the UK in March.

“We’re a bunch of kids who play rock’n’roll, who were inspired to be the greatest musicians they can be.”

Jake Kiszka

2019: THE YEAR ROCK STRIKES BACK

Far from being dead, 'proper' rock is having a real resurgence. We look at its recent rise and at some of the artists poised to bring it on home.

Words: **Dave Everley**

Every corner of popular culture has its breakout stars. It's an age-old concept: the hot young thing who arrives out of nowhere and becomes the talk of the town, racking up column inches (or the modern equivalent, YouTube views), starting conversations. Hollywood has them, TV has them, pop music, hip-hop and R&B have them.

The one area that hasn't had an honest-to-God breakout star in a long time is rock'n'roll. Not since the late 90s and the days of nu metal, Marilyn Manson and the Foo Fighters has it produced a band or artist that has broken beyond the genre's boundaries. That isn't to say that it hasn't had its next-gen success stories – Ghost, Halestorm and countless others have all given lie to the glib notion that rock is dead – but no one has truly stormed the gates of mainstream culture the way they used to.

Or at least they haven't until now. In the past two years, Greta Van Fleet have gone from being a bunch of goofy Midwestern kids who sound a lot like Led Zeppelin to being proper breakout stars. The Michigan band have crossed over in a way that many people thought would never happen again. They've played at Coachella and celeb-studded parties – the sort of places bands who look and sound like GVF do don't normally get invited to. They recently bagged four Grammy nominations, including one for the prestigious Best New Artist (the last rock band to be nominated was Paramore back in 2008; the last one to win was Evanescence four years before that).

But Greta Van Fleet represent something bigger too: the potential resurgence of rock'n'roll as a cultural force.

This month Rival Sons release *Feral Roots*, their sixth album and their first for a major label, Atlantic. British nouveau-glam rockers The Struts spent a large chunk of 2018 supporting the Foo Fighters on tour in the US, and their second album, *Young&Dangerous*, was one of the year's most talked-about releases.

"I think there was a scepticism on the part of the music industry that this kind of music would ever come back," says Jason Flom, CEO of Lava Records and the man who discovered and signed Greta Van Fleet. "But now you've got a bunch of guys playing pure rock music, who are bringing this sound and this experience to a new generation."

It's impossible to pinpoint exactly when rock began its commercial decline. The last genuinely momentous movement was nu metal in the late 90s. But even at its height, that genre was never a guaranteed express elevator to the top.

"Breaking a rock band is a long process, regardless of the climate," says Benjamin Berkman, manager of The Struts, the British band who are leading the charge alongside Greta Van Fleet. "As the great Bon Scott said, it's a long way to the top – and that was in 1975."

But rock's commercial potency undeniably began to wane in the mid-00s. A thesis could be written on the cultural and generational changes that precipitated this decline, but one major factor that played a part was that young people found other ways to entertain themselves.

The Struts: leading rock's new charge from the UK.

"I think there was a scepticism on the part of the music industry that this kind of music would ever come back." Jason Flom, CEO of Lava Records

"Traditionally the music industry and its investment in new talent is led by the younger generation, and young people are attracted to things other than music," says Chris Ingham, co-organiser of the classic rock-themed Ramblin' Man Fair festival. "Even within music, they have more choice now. Grime is just this generation's punk."

The emergence of streaming culture has only compounded matters. The likes of Spotify (launched in 2006) and Apple Music (2015) tend to spotlight more popular – and lucrative – genres such as pop, R&B and hip-hop. Rock fans have to take at least part of the blame themselves for that – studies show that they're less likely to engage with Spotify than fans of other styles of music.

"I believe that the rock fan is more about the album than the pop or hip-hop fan is," says Benjamin Berkman. "Those audiences seem to be song-driven, and with a few exceptions probably don't consume entire albums or longer sets of music. To be deemed a 'credible' rock band you still need an album or at least an EP. While EPs and albums certainly exist on the streaming sites, it doesn't seem that most consumers utilise these platforms for that purpose."

How you view the potential return of rock depends on whether you think it went away in the first place. Every festival essentially stands or falls on the strength of its bill. Ramblin' Man Fair boss Chris Ingham says a big part of its draw is their commitment to new bands. The likes of Black Stone Cherry, Rival Sons and Tyler Bryant & The Shakedown have all appeared on the main stage at Ramblin' Man, while the popular Rising Stage offers a unique platform for new and unsigned bands. Acts that have broken through on the latter include Bad Touch and blues-rock hotshot Kris Barras.

"There is a huge amount of talent out there," says Ingham. "We had more than five hundred bands apply to play on the Rising Stage last year. I would have given the top thirty of them recording contracts. They were all that good."

He says the Rising Stage's popularity is indicative of the passion that remains for rock music – and a desire from the people involved to share their discoveries with like-minded music fans.

"Many people who come to the festival are lifelong rock fans," Ingham continues. "It's often literally a lifestyle. And while they may have ▷

GETTY

Greta Van Fleet: the band of the moment.

Tyler Bryant is among the new artists winning over the rock crowd.

"It feels like [Greta Van Fleet] can open the door for a shedload of other younger bands."

Jeremy Wills

their favourite bands from 1980, they didn't give up listening to or wishing to discover new music in any way."

The presence of a thriving grass-roots community of rock fans with an appetite for new music is underlined by a Facebook group called The New Wave Of Classic Rock. It was founded in 2017 as a platform for people to share videos and recommendations of new bands they've heard or seen. "We all felt that there were so many quality new bands around," says its co-founder and administrator Jeremy Wills. "It really feels like something is happening."

Wills says one of the reasons the group was set up was as a reaction to rock fans who were disparaging of the current scene. "We were fed up of people saying: 'There's no good new bands, music's rubbish,'" he says. "So we said: 'How can we think of something to get the older fans to check out the new rock bands?' And that's where we came up with the New Wave Of Classic Rock name. We thought it might get them to have a look."

It's clearly working – the group currently has 10,000 members. But it's more than just a means of swapping tips on exciting new bands – it also acts as a support system for the grass-roots rock scene. When Australian band Tequila Mockingbyrd had their equipment stolen during a European tour earlier this year, Wills and his colleagues printed and sold T-shirts to help them out financially. When a Bad Touch gig in Cornwall was left on the verge of cancellation after the promoter pulled out, the group swung into action again, advertising the show and adding another band to the bill. After NWOCR marshalled the troops, ticket sales for the gig rocketed.

The rise of Greta Van Fleet has provoked what Wills calls "a Marmite reaction" on the group's page. "Some people love them, some people don't. But it feels like they can open the door for a shedload of other younger bands. If it means even one teenager starts playing rock music, that's a good thing."

The Struts: "It's important to push the limits."

While the success of Ramblin' Man Fair's Rising Stage and the New Wave Of Classic Rock Facebook group is proof of a vibrant grass-roots scene, it's a huge leap from there to putting rock music front and centre on the cultural landscape once again.

With rock fans generally having a mutually antipathetic relation with Spotify and Apple Music, and mainstream radio virtually ignoring the genre – even Greta Van Fleet struggle to get played on pop radio – it has forced bands and managers to come up with more inventive ways of reaching potential audiences.

For The Struts, this has included appearing at the Victoria's Secret's Fashion Show, and duetting with pop star Kesha on a version of this year's *Body Talks* single. As Struts manager Benjamin Berkman, points out, the latter isn't a new idea – Aerosmith did it more than 30 years ago when they teamed up with Run DMC for *Walk This Way*.

"I think it's always been important to push the limits and look for ways to expose yourself to the fan bases of other, perhaps more popular artists," says Berkman, who points out that Kesha is "a total rock chick at heart" and has collaborated with Alice Cooper and the Eagles Of Death metal. "Given that the listening audience at rock radio is paltry compared to those at the pop formats, you definitely need to selectively find ways to separate yourself from the pack, while of course doing things that remain 'on brand'."

That's not to say the traditional routes to success don't still work. "Honestly, from where I sit it's about live shows and it's about playing for more people in each city than you played for the last time you were in that city," says Pete Ganbarg, the A&R executive responsible for signing Rival Sons to Atlantic Records for their new album, *Feral Roots*. "Which is not that different from how it went in the seventies. If you're getting into the rock business as a label, you have to be more patient. You can get a hot rap record that's going to stream twenty, thirty million times a week. You can't expect that from a rock record."

Does the modern music industry have that kind of patience?

GRETA VAN FLEET + TYLER BRYANT & THE SHAKEDOWN: WILL IRELAND; THE STRUTS: KEVIN NIXON

"If you're getting into the rock business as a label, you have to be more patient."

Atlantic Records' Pete Ganbarg

"I know that Atlantic Records does," he says. "Our philosophy is definitely one of patience and artist development. I would rather be the one label with patience, and hopefully be patient enough to be standing side-stage at Madison Square Garden when Rival Sons or Halestorm or whoever it is is actually headlining."

Of course, being on a major label isn't the be all and end all. Neither is it a guarantee of success, as countless bands can vouch. But wider commercial success is indicative of how healthy a scene is – and, let's face it, everyone wants to see their team winning.

There are positive ramifications to what's happening. The music industry habitually follows its own lead. If one band does well, its natural inclination is to invest in more bands like it. By that measure, the success of Greta Van Fleet could have a beneficial effect on the likes of Rival Sons (who, ironically, were doing this long before the GVF's Kiszka brothers picked up their instruments).

The 'Greta Van Fleet effect' is already starting to kick in, according to their label's Jason Flom. He says he has seen a rise in the amount of music the label has received from pure rock'n'roll bands. "I have and I love it. Naturally, now more than ever bands want to be on the label that Greta Van Fleet are on. It's logical – they see what's happening, and they recognise that there's a good vibe there."

(By contrast, Atlantic's Pete Ganbarg says he hasn't noticed any uplift. "Not specifically, no. I think that two guitars, bass and drums was here before them and will be here after them.")

The behind-the-scenes factors that combine to make or break a band or artist are many and complex: the right business strategy, a strong team behind you, the support of radio and streaming service, and, crucially, great songs. "And only the very best will make it to the top," says Chris Ingham. "But that still leaves enough others that will be good enough at a level whereby they can make decent-sounding music and perform at decent-sized venues."

Ultimately, what we're seeing now is just the latest cycle that stretches back to the beginnings of the music industry. Genres, notably rock and hip-hop, have had the last rites read to them, only to come back stronger than ever.

"I think all pop culture is cyclical, and right now the zeitgeist is reflecting hip-hop and pop artists as the 'rock stars' of today," says Benjamin Berkman. "At one point no one could imagine a band like Guns N' Roses or Nirvana topping the charts. But they did, and I think it will again should another band emerge with music that is as brilliant and has a frontman or woman of the calibre of Axl Rose or Kurt Cobain."

Even if GVF do prove to be rock's sole new breakout stars, they've at least proved that the genre is far from dead. There's no point waiting for the resurrection of rock'n'roll. It's already happening.

DOROTHY: SKYLAR BARBERIO/PRESS; SHEER MAG: GETTY

TAKE FIVE

Any of these bands could be the next Greta Van Fleet.

JOYOUS WOLF

They are: livewires whose dirty rock'n'roll noise sounds like the bastard offspring of the blues and heavy metal. They've attracted the attention of both Slash and Roadrunner Records (who recently signed them).

For fans of: *Greta Van Fleet, The White Stripes*

Key track: *Sleep Weep Stomp*

WHITE REAPER

They are: Kentucky power-pop garage-rock heroes who are unafraid to rock out '77-style. The title of their second album, 2017's *The World's Best American Band,* might be tongue-in-cheek, but it's also pretty accurate.

For fans of: *Cheap Trick, Biters*

Key track: *Judy French*

DOROTHY

They are: ultra-classy LA rockers fronted by powerhouse singer Dorothy Martin. Their two albums, 2015's *Rockisdead* and 2017's *28 Days In The Valley*, were released on rap superstar Jay-Z's Roc Nation label.

For fans of: *Halestorm, the Rolling Stones*

Key track: *Dark Night*

SHEER MAG

They are: the unlikely point where DIY punk, 70s rock and vintage R&B all meet. Singer Tina Halladay has charisma to burn, while the band's 2017 debut album, *Need To Feel Your Love*, adds an underground twist to classic rock'n'roll.

For fans of: *Alabama Shakes, AC/DC*

Key track: *Meet Me In The Street*

STATION

They are: "New York City rock'n'roll", according to them. An utterly glorious nod to the kind of skyscraper-chorused primo 80s hard rock that grunge tried – and clearly failed – to kill.

For fans of: *Def Leppard, Skid Row, H.e.a.t*

Key track: *I Won't Break Your Heart*

BACK TO THE FUTURE

After years of hard graft and staying true to their retro musical vision, has **Rival Sons**' time finally come with their major-label debut?

Words: **Dave Everley** Photos: **Ross Halfin**

Rival Sons' 'piss or get off the pot' moment came early in their career. Scott Holiday isn't sure precisely when, but he can remember where. "The lovely city of Cleveland, Ohio," the guitarist says without any discernible rancour.

Rival Sons had been booked into a venue that could hold a couple of thousand people, but the combination of a group with zero profile in the US and a support act that bailed at the eleventh hour meant the audience barely reached double figures. The band had already spent months driving around in splitter vans, living below the breadline, convincing themselves that they were doing the right thing. But this was an almighty kick in the nuts.

"We had to face up what was going on," says Holiday. "We had a long talk with each other. Like, 'Why the fuck are we doing this? Is this what we really want?' And we went out and played this show and it was just exceptional. People were rolling on the ground, freaking the fuck out, losing their minds. We were the best we could be. It was, like, [gleefully] 'Oh, *shit*!'"

As the band pulled away after the show, they knew what their future held. "Something happened that night. It was cathartic. It reaffirmed why we wanted to do this. Everyone believed in the group and in each other and in the mission of playing rock'n'roll."

However many years down the line, Rival Sons have stayed true to that mission, resolute to the point of fundamentalism in the power and authenticity of their music.

That determination has paid off. The band's new album, *Feral Roots*, is simultaneously their most direct, most nuanced and most urgent yet – the kind of record that bands 10 years into their career shouldn't make.

There's another reason why it's significant. After almost a decade in the trenches with British indie label Earache, *Feral Roots* marks Rival Sons' major-label debut. The band signed to Atlantic Records last year. This record might officially be on long-time producer Dave Cobb's Low Country Sound imprint, but it's the label that launched Led Zeppelin that's providing the muscle.

It's an impressive reversal of the downward, major-to-indie arc that most bands this far into their career follow. And that's not even factoring in Greta Van Fleet, 2018's biggest success story and a band who are mining a seam of rock'n'roll gold that Holiday and his bandmates uncovered years ago. It's starting to look like the world is finally catching up with Rival Sons. And Rival Sons know it.

"We're watching a tidal wave about to unleash," says singer Jay Buchanan. "People have been predicting this imminent return to form for the last couple of years. These things come in cycles, and it's absolutely natural that it's going to happen. I see it happening now. And I absolutely feel part of it."

Somewhere within the vast expanse of a suburban Orange County, 40 miles from downtown Los Angeles and 10 minutes' drive from the Pacific Ocean, is the faceless rehearsal studio where Rival Sons are preparing for the most important chapter of their career so far.

Right now, Jay Buchanan is reclining on a low sofa in the studio's kitchen-come-green room as the stop-start thump of the rest of the band reacquainting themselves with songs they last played in a studio several months ago drifts in from down the corridor. The singer apologises for not letting me sit in while they practice. "This is only our second day here," he says. "We're still trying to get these songs under our hands."

Buchanan carries himself exactly like you want a rock star to carry ▷

“We’re watching a tidal wave about to unleash. And I absolutely feel part of it.”

Jay Buchanan

"There's no Zeppelin without Robert Plant. There's no Rolling Stones without Mick. Without Jay we don't have this band."

Michael Miley

Giving it everything: Jay Buchanan sings his heart out.

himself. He looks the part: at least 75 per cent leather, fake fur and Native American jewellery (he's of Creek Indian heritage). He certainly talks the part: intense and charismatic, sometimes elliptical, occasionally blunt.

It's ironic, given that Buchanan never wanted to be a rock star. He's talked in the past about finding rock'n'roll "adolescent… predictable". When he spoke to *Classic Rock* in 2014, he freely admitted that there were aspects of Rival Sons that were "complete bullshit – I look around and a lot of it is about lifestyle. So little of it is about music."

Today he seems more comfortable with the idea of being the singer in a rock'n'roll band – and in Rival Sons specifically. "It's just like any other situation, like a marriage or whatever," he says. "You have to fertilise it and nourish it. And it ends up taking its own shape. Does it always retain my interest? Not always. It's like anything else: sometimes you get bored, or you fall out of love. So you have to continually seek out new stimuli."

In the case of *Feral Roots,* that new stimuli came right at the start of the process. The singer moved to Nashville almost three years ago, while Holiday remained in California. Rather than exchange ideas long-distance, the pair opted to hole up in a remote shack owned by a friend on a spit of land between two man-made lakes near the small town of Hohenwald in Northern Tennessee.

"It's pretty threadbare in terms of amenities," Buchanan says. "But when you induce a severe lack of distractions it allows you to be present. It was the spirit of nutrition we needed."

The two of them stayed in the shack for a week, "talking, lightning candles and coming up with some far-out ideas." In a decade of being in a band together, they had never worked this closely.

"We were really trying to graft our individual energies together, as opposed to it being two separate people doing things in tandem," he explains. "It was really the pairing of the preacher and the gunslinger."

Asked who's who, he laughs. "Scott's obviously the gunslinger," he says, "I'm the one who's given to long lectures and monologues."

This much is true. One of *Feral Roots*' stand-out tracks is *Look Away*, a song that Buchanan describes as "a discourse on the inherent confusion with the body politic and the rapidly changing social norms and the entitlement through the anonymity that comes with social media and everything. I see these as very exciting times, but it's easy to retreat and become complacent. Making the decision not to look away is important."

LIVE: KEVIN NIXON

There's an equally layered meaning behind the album title. Buchanan equates the term 'feral roots' to "a return to form" – not getting back on top, he says, but a return to who you are.

"We live in a technologically sophisticated global community, everyone clamouring for your attention. And the further you get into this *Logan's Run* world, the more attractive the jungle is going to seem to you. 'Feral roots' is really about keeping one hand in the mystic. About keeping a link to the past as you move into the future."

The grounded outlook has shaped his view of the major-label machine. He's had his own unfavourable experiences of the music industry mincer as a young solo artist, when a big record company tried (unsuccessfully) to mould him into something he wasn't. He says he went into this deal with his eyes open.

"I was very much: 'This is who you're dealing with, this is the way I look at things, don't expect me to be something I don't want to be,'" he says. "But then it's just too clichéd to have an adversarial relationship with them: [surly teenager voice] 'Yeah, whatever, you're not my real dad.' They're a business, there are financial and commercial expectations. Their bottom line is to make money out of our intellectual property. And I understand that. And I hope that they make as much money as possible, because it means we're doing something right. But we're never going to let that damage our credibility, because that credibility has been earned."

The process of making *Feral Roots* took the best part of a year. It wasn't one long solid chunk, although it's still the longest Rival Sons have ever spent making an album, by several months, which is a luxury that major-label money brings.

"We're not paying attention to that," says Holiday, sharply and a touch defensively. "That's just business. They're the people who are going to work the record and give us financial support and the rest, but it's not like they're dictating what we're doing. We did it like this because we had the chance to take our time."

Like Buchanan, he's been burned by a major label before. In the late 90s he was a member of a band named HumanLab, who recorded an album for – incoming irony grenade! – Atlantic, only for it be shelved before it could get released.

"Ah, I got over that a long time ago," he says, as we dart between cars. "I'm not bitter. Things happen. The climate has changed drastically, it's like we're in a different world. And we're different people too. It's less likely to get fumbled, because of who were are now and the work we've all put in."

Anyway, he says, he's invested too much in Rivals Sons over the years to let someone else screw things up. That show in Cleveland might have been a tipping point for Rival Sons, but it wasn't a one-off. The band's early years were spent slogging around North America and Europe with little to show for it.

"We all need to make good records. It's time to step up."

Scott Holiday

Scott Holiday drives like you expect a rock'n'roll guitarist to drive: fast, loops and with only cursory regard for anyone else in his orbit. We're sitting in his black sports car, driving the 20 miles to Long Beach for a photo session.

As he drives, jumping from lane to lane, we talk. He points out the street he lives on in Huntington Beach, a couple of blocks from the ocean. Is he ever tempted to move up to Los Angeles.

"Move to LA? Why?" he asks, laughing. "LA sucks. It's the Kiss of cities. Nah, I love it here. I live at the beach. I like to look at the ocean. I get in that flow. Why would I move?"

The week-long wood-shedding session in the wilds of Tennessee wasn't just a creative escape for Holiday, it was practical necessity too. "I'm a single dad with two kids," he says. "I don't get a lot of help because I'm really buried when I'm home. We needed to leave and get our heads totally cleared out. So that's what we did."

DAVE COBB: GETTY

"I was married, we'd just had two kids, I'd moved in with the in-laws cos we were making no money, playing to big empty rooms," he says. They frequently questioned why they were doing it: "'Are we doing this to be famous? Are we doing this to be rich?' And the answer to both was, and is, wholeheartedly 'No.'" A laugh. "Definitely not to be rich."

So why are you doing it?

"Because I'm this animal. I play music, it's what I do. It makes me feel good, it completes me as a human being, it's why I am. And I can look at the guys I'm partnered up with and go: 'I know that's why they're here too.'"

Holiday isn't oblivious to Greta Van Fleet's success, and he genuinely doesn't seem bitter that it's happened in a tenth of the time his own band have spent slogging around the gig circuit and getting a fraction of the attention.

"Me and Jay met them. They seem like the nicest guys and I'm really happy for them," he says. "I think it's gonna be tough, because they've got to parade around in their underwear a little bit with everyone watching. But they're handling it well."

Does it feel like they've stolen your thunder?

"Nah," he says, taking his eyes off the road for a moment and swiveling his head. "We all need to make good records right now. You can't half-ass that shit, man." He pauses. "I don't think some people have put out their best work. People are still finding their feet. People, find your fucking feet right now. It's time for everyone to step up." ▷

There from the beginning: producer Dave Cobb.

DAVE COBB

Rival Sons' long-time producer talks about what he brings to the party.

You've worked with Rival Sons since their first album. What did you see in them when you first met them?
They reminded me of the records I loved as a kid – AC/DC, Zeppelin, Black Sabbath. And then when they found Jay, they just stepped up another level. He's one of the best rock'n'roll singers around.

Were they the finished article already back then?
I think they were becoming a band. When you start a band, you're the sum of all your influences, and those influences start to melt together. They've got a sound now, and every record's been an evolution towards that.

Jay and Scott are chalk and cheese. Was it hard getting them to fit together at first?
They hit it off immediately. Scott went searching for a singer and found Jay, and Scott was a big fan right away.

What's your role in it all?
Most of those records are done in between one and three takes. My job is to be the guy who doesn't let them over-think. To pull out attitude in every single person in the band.

What part did you play in getting them signed to Atlantic?
It's funny, because I have a label on Atlantic [Low Country Sound], but it really happened naturally. An A&R and radio person who fell in love with them said: "Do you know this Rival Sons band?" I'm like: "Are you kidding me? I've known them from the beginning."

Did Rival Sons pave the way for Greta Van Fleet?
It's true. And I think it's great that a band like that are getting a massive lift. Everything happens in cycles, and right now rock'n'roll has a chance.

Looking at a bright future: (l-r) Jay Buchanan, Scott Holiday, Dave Beste, Michael Miley.

Does that include Rival Sons?

"Dude," he says. "We stepped up a *long* time ago."

Rival Sons' biggest fan is two beers and several mouthfuls of deep-fried cauliflower into a conversation about his favourite group. "I always say I have the best seat in the house," says their drummer Michael Miley, "because I sit behind everybody and I get to see up-close how great this band is."

We're sitting in a bar somewhere in Long Beach. The late afternoon stragglers are drifting out, driven out by the loud music that forces Miley to lean into the recording device on the table in front of him to make himself heard.

Holiday, Buchanan and bassist Dave Beste have gone their separate ways after the photo session. Miley is staying in a hotel close by because it's too far to drive home (he splits his time between Ventura County, north of Los Angeles, and Estonia, where he lives with his Estonian wife).

If Buchanan is the preacher and Holiday the gunslinger, then Miley is the sheriff with the tin star and righteous attitude. He's as good a pitch man for his band as he is a drummer – and he's a tremendous drummer.

"This was the first time we let Scott and Jay properly exchange ideas all the way through," he says of *Feral Roots*. "It's the peanut butter and jelly sandwich; they're both brilliant in their own right."

We're a stone's throw from the bar where Miley first saw Jay Buchanan sing back in the 00s, on the recommendation of friends. "It was just Jay and a guitar and a microphone," he says. "There were, like, five people there watching this guy sing his fucking ass off." Miley was blown away.

At the end of the set, he walked up to Buchanan and handed him his card. "I said: 'Dude, if your drummer ever calls in sick I'd love to play with you.'"

Miley did end up playing in one incarnation of the singer's solo band, and was the one who recommended him when Rival Sons were getting off the ground. He's watched Buchanan wrestle with the idea of being a 'rock'n'roll' singer and all the baggage that comes with it. Is he surprised Buchanan is still in the band?

"Yeah, sometimes, because I think he's still reticent. When I hear him sing, I hear zero reticence. But when it comes to business stuff and photo-shoots and things like that, he doesn't want to fully embrace it. He doesn't want to be a cliché. But he's never going to be a cliché. When Jay walks on stage he's a fucking alien. He's superhuman. As great as Scott is – or as great as any one of us is – you need a frontman who represents the voice of the band. There's no Zeppelin without Robert Plant. There's no Rolling Stones without Mick Jagger. Without Jay we don't have this band."

Feral Roots feels like as much of a tipping point for Rival Sons as that show in Cleveland where no one showed up. It's not the sound of a band finding their place in the bigger scheme of things so much as the point where the bigger scheme of things might come around to what's been happening under its nose for the last few years.

"Right!" Miley exclaims. "The old guard are laying down their swords. Black Sabbath have done their farewell tour, we'll never see Led Zeppelin again. There's gonna be a big hole opening up in the market, and we're in the perfect place to step in. We've worked our asses off, we've played with a lot of those guys – the Sabbaths, the Deep Purples. It's almost like they're endorsing us."

Miley says he heard that Atlantic wanted to sign an honest-to-God rock band after seeing a string of fringe artists win Best Rock Act-type awards at the Grammys. "They signed us because they wanted to bring rock'n'roll back. And they think that we're the ones to wave that flag."

There are still factors that can conspire against them, not least the mainstream's reluctance to embrace hard rock. If it does, Rival Sons are in prime position to reap the fruit of their long, sometimes lonely labours. And if for some reason it doesn't? The mission of playing rock'n'roll goes on all the same.

Feral Roots is out on January 25 via Low Country Sound/Atlantic.

"Scott's obviously the gunslinger. I'm the one who's given to long lectures and monologues."

Jay Buchanan

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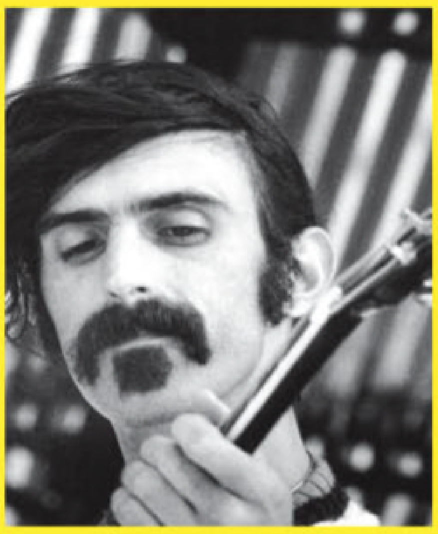

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"We were sick of being treated like a joke. Too metal for punk, too punk for metal. Fk that, we were neither."**

Lemmy

GETTY

Good And Löud

Out of step with music fashions of the late 70s, **Motörhead** arrived with barely with an audience or a future. Then they released *Overkill* and boarded a rocket to the moon.

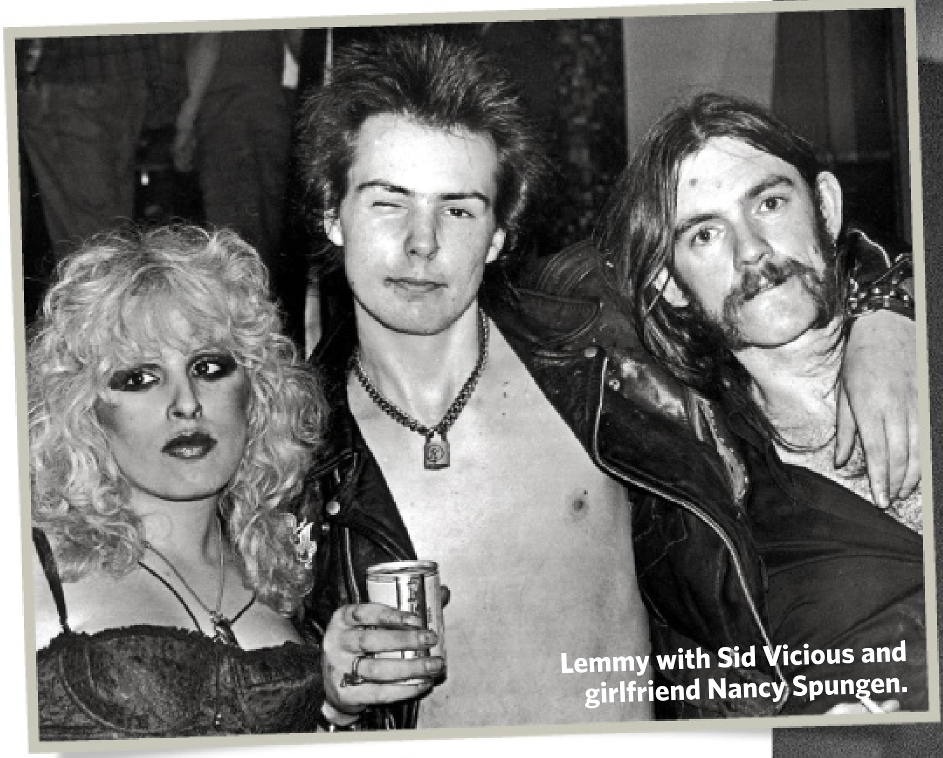
Words: **Mick Wall**

"It was make or break, simple as that," said Lemmy. We were sitting in his Ladbroke pad – like a cross between Steptoe's yard and the living room of *The Young Ones*. It was about 1984. But it could have been any time during the 35 years I knew him. He was drinking from a pint glass of Jack Daniel's and Coke and smoking two cigarettes at once, one with something funny in it. On the table between us lay a huge mirror he had taken down off the wall, on its surface a small hill of white powder. Not salt. Or sugar. He pawed at it with a large hunting knife.

"We were sick of being treated like a joke, or a sort of freak show," he continued. "Too metal for punk, too punk for metal. Fuck that, we were neither. It wasn't until we did *Overkill*, though, that even we knew what we were, really. That was the album that changed everything for us."

It certainly was. Until its release in 1979, Motörhead had, as Lemmy correctly suggested, been something of a joke, beyond the gangs of bikers and their old ladies that followed them. Or rather, just not taken seriously. Lemmy had been in Hawkwind, for God's sake. In the crumbling post-punk London of 1979, Hawkwind were about as fashionable as a toilet seat round the neck. He sounded horrible too, like a giant gargling with rusty nails. And they had all this hair down their backs, all over their faces. And they made records like *Louie Louie*, with guitarist 'Fast' Eddie Clarke mirroring the electric bash-bash piano riff of the original by The Kingsmen, which frankly wasn't all that good in the first place.

Motörhead's record company, Bronze, thought they were crap. Label chief Gerry Bron later admitted: "The first time I heard Motörhead was when I listened to a single that I put out without hearing, which was *Louie Louie*, and when I heard it I was horrified. I thought it was the worst record I've ever heard, so it was a bit of a shock. The bigger shock was, having put out a ▷



Lemmy with Sid Vicious and girlfriend Nancy Spungen.

"We had already thrown the towel in at least twice before *Overkill* saved us."

Eddie Clarke

Rocking the Music Machine, Camden, London, February 23, 1978.

record I thought was terrible, it went straight into the chart at number seventy-two."

So far, so blah.

Then, in March 1979, came *Overkill*, first the pummelling song, then the 150mph album. And over the course of one long, sleepless, bone-rattling, bottle-smashing, speed-snorting night, everything changed. Just like that.

"We had already thrown the towel in at least twice before *Overkill* saved us," Eddie Clarke told me not long before he died in 2018. "The first album we did [*Motörhead*, in 1977] had been thrown together in about three days, based on a handful of originals, a couple Hawkwind leftovers and *Train Kept-A-Rollin'* which everybody and his dog had done before. Success for us meant coming away with a few quid from a gig, a gram of speed and a joint while some bird sucked your knob."

It was only after Doug Smith – the Hawkwind manager they had already sacked once then gone crawling back to – took a last-ditch chance on them and forked out for them to record *Louie Louie* that things began at last to look up. He then took the tapes to Dave Betteridge, "an old mate" at Bronze Records. "I told Dave: 'Let's do a single. It's already recorded so you don't have to pay for it. And if it charts we'll do a deal with you.'" Betteridge agreed to put the single out – without telling his boss, Gerry Bron. Everyone involved was astounded when the single, released on September 30, 1978 jumped straight into the chart.

"Bronze was a fucking great record company, let me tell you," says Smith. They even parlayed the success of the single into Motörhead's first ever appearance on *Top Of The Pops*. Clarke was "doing a painting and decorating job to bring a bit of cash in" when the show aired. "I had to ask the punters if we could watch their telly, because I was on in a minute! I was standing there in my overalls with a paintbrush in my hand."

The limited chart success of *Louie Louie* also garnered Motörhead their first John Peel session, on which they played the single, B-side *Tear Ya Down* and *Keep Us On The Road* and *I'll Be Your Sister*. Suddenly, Motörhead were in danger of actually becoming cool. That situation wasn't hindered by Lemmy's growing presence on the London punk scene, appearing on stage for a one-off show at the Music Machine with The Dammed (billed as The Doomed) and being photographed with Sid Vicious, who let it be known that Lemmy "was the one what taught me the bass".

With momentum now building beneath them, a 10-date autumn '78 British tour was extended into a full-blown extravaganza, culminating in November with Motörhead's first headline show in their own right at Hammersmith Odeon, a venue that would become part of their growing mythology.

Motörhead's signing to a long-term contract with Bronze now seemed like a formality. But just to be sure, Doug Smith made sure Gerry Bron was at the Odeon to gauge the reaction of the audience for himself. "I knew it was going to be full and that the fans would go mad," says Smith, "the hard part was making sure people like Gerry and Dave and Neil [Warnock, promoter] were all there to see it."

Doug needn't have worried. As Gerry later told Dave Ling: "I went to see them at Hammersmith Odeon and it was packed to the rafters with people going absolutely crazy." That was when he knew that "we had to sign them right away," he said.

So began a four-year period in which virtually everything Lemmy and Motörhead touched turned to gold – or at the very least, silver. Four Top 20 singles, three of which went Top 10. Six Top 30 albums, including two that went Top 10 and one all the way to No.1. It was also now that Lemmy (words) and Clarke (riffs) co-wrote all the songs that would make Motörhead a legend.

"Lemmy was still finding his feet as a lyricist, and I'm not a virtuoso, I'm a journeyman," Clarke told me. "But Clapton never came up with *Ace Of Spades* or *Bomber*. My job was giving Lemmy something to sing over. And we were a great team like that."

The trick, he said, was: "You're bombing along having a fucking ball, then as you're having a ball you put a couple of little changes in, and next thing you've got a song."

Drummer Phil 'Philthy Animal' Taylor was always credited as an equal co-writer on the albums because, said Clarke, "we knew if we did make it, that we didn't want Lemmy and I coming to work in Rolls-Royces and Phil on a pushbike."

Yet it was Taylor who came up with the musical motif that turned Motörhead from a street-level ▷

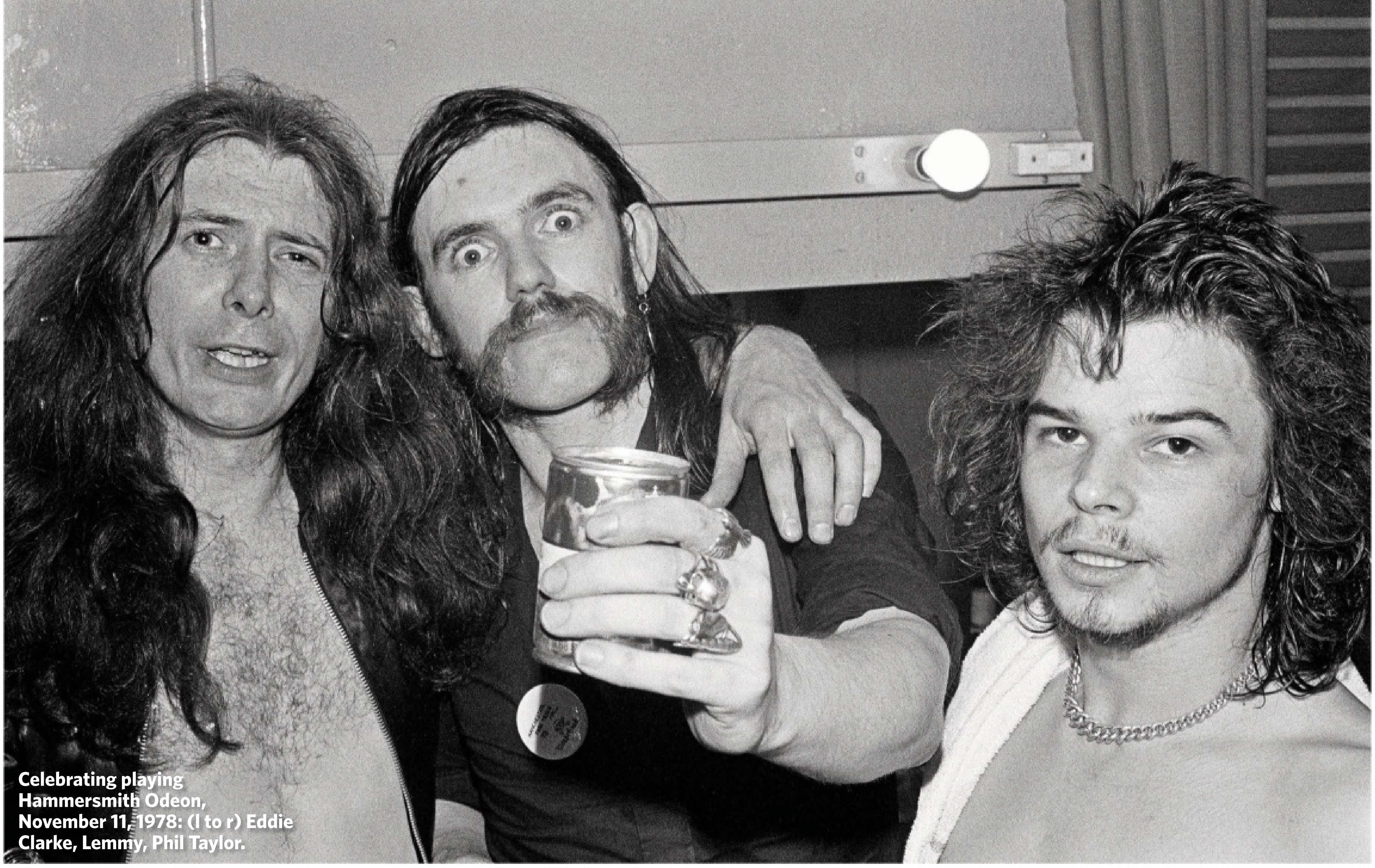
MAIN: CAMERA PRESS/PAUL SLATTERY; INSET: GETTY

Eddie Clarke, Phil Taylor and Lemmy in front of a Snaggletooth mural on London's Harrow Road, February '79.

"Success for us meant coming away with a few quid from a gig, a gram of speed and a joint while some bird sucked your knob."

Eddie Clarke

CAMERA PRESS / PAUL SLATTERY



Celebrating playing Hammersmith Odeon, November 11, 1978: (l to r) Eddie Clarke, Lemmy, Phil Taylor.

"In the end we just had to trash the place. Lemmy smashed something in the toilet and they sent us a bill for a hundred quid." 'Eddie Clarke

punk-metal band into something far more transcendent, when, to test out a new drum kit, he began pounding out the outrageous double-time rhythm to what became one of the most famous Motörhead songs of all time: *Overkill*. They were rehearsing in Notting Hill, and Taylor had just taken possession of a new kit fitted, unusually for the times, with two kick drums.

Clarke: "Phil goes: 'Why can't we do a song like this?' and starts going mental, cos he's got these two bass drums and he doesn't know what to fucking do with them. Lemmy goes: 'All right, then,' starts playing in E, as he usually did, and I jumped in. Ten minutes later we had *Overkill*. We were all grinning, going: 'Yeah, that was a bit of all right. Let's do it again…' That was the big turning point song-wise. It was fantastic! Blimey, we loved that!"

The lyrics Lemmy came up with for *Overkill* reflected the speed and sheer exuberance of the track: '*On your feet you feel the beat, it goes straight to your spine/Shake your head, you must be dead if it don't make you fly!*' The band were so delighted they made it the title track of their first album for Bronze, and insisted it be the first single released from it. It was Taylor's over-the-top drums on the track, though, that would leave the most lasting impression, not least on the approaching wave of thrash and speed metal bands. As Metallica drummer and former president of the US Motörhead fan club Lars Ulrich later told me: "Phil Taylor was the first drummer I ever heard play that double bass type of thing. The first time I heard *Overkill* it fucking blew my head off. I could not believe what I was hearing. Of course, then I wanted to play like that too."

Taylor seemed totally unaware of the revolution he had helped create, admitting that when Metallica later supported Motörhead on an early tour, he barely understood what was going on, they played so damn fast. It's worth mentioning at this juncture, though, that there was far more to the Philthy Phil's playing than mere speed and power. It also provided the furious music template for future musical escapades like *Ace Of Spades*, another classic Motörhead song built around Taylor's ferocious double kick drums. More than just the blood and thunder of traditional heavy rock, this was street survival.

Clarke recalled how Lemmy used to get exasperated at first at Phil's habit of playing in double time, yelling at him: "Fucking hell! Can't you play a straight four!" But then, as Clarke points out, Lemmy's bass could also be "fucking difficult" to play along with. "It was fucking difficult because there was no bottom end. Especially in those days, a bottom end on the bass was how it was played. Well, we didn't have any. So that made life very, very tricky. That's why the very first album was quite difficult. Just trying to get that fucking sound down on tape was almost impossible."

It was a task made immeasurably simpler on the *Overkill* album by the sheer quality of the songs. In the likes of *Damage Case* and *Limb From Limb* the band had taken rock and metal to a new, shuddering level of power. While on a track like *I'll Be Your Sister* they belied their own flying-sparks riffs with the kind of insightful, tender lyric that Leonard Cohen would have been proud of: '*I'll be your lover, be your sister, baby/I'll be your mother… Need someone, set your heart on fire/It's lonely, hanging on the wire…*' "I like to read books, what can I tell you?" Lemmy grinned when I asked about these lyrics. "Just because we like very loud music doesn't mean we don't enjoy quieter moments."

With the £30,000 advance from Bronze that Doug Smith had negotiated for them, Motörhead had been able to afford to hire legendary former Rolling Stones producer Jimmy Miller to oversee two months at Roundhouse studios making what would be their breakthrough album.

Overkill proved that musically you now underestimated Motörhead at your peril. In fact, Lemmy's skill on the bass – much like Taylor's on drums and Clarke's on guitar – was hugely underrated. Where his bass style in Hawkwind had been based on drones and power chords, it was the latter that now came into play more prominently in Motörhead. This was partly out of convenience. Making a two-string power chord and strumming at it with a pick is a damn sight easier than picking individual strings, especially when your head is pointed upwards at an unnatural angle, and you're shouting into a microphone and unable to see the fretboard. It was this hammer-down, less-is-more approach

MAIN: CAMERA PRESS/PAUL SLATTERY; INSET: GETTY

Lemmy with The Damned's Rat Scabies and The Adverts' Gaye Advert at London's Music Machine in February '78 when the three bands shared the bill.

Motörhead on *Top Of The Pops* in 1979

"The first time I heard *Overkill* it fking blew my head off. I could not believe what I was hearing."**

Lars Ulrich, Metallica

that became a key component in the signature Motörhead sound, as evinced on every one of the 10 tracks on *Overkill*.

With the single and album released two weeks apart in March 1979, and a 20-date UK headline tour to coincide, *Overkill* became the first Motörhead album to make the UK Top 30, reaching No.24, while the single gave them their first Top 40 hit, reaching No.39.

There was another *Top Of The Pops* appearance to go with it, Lemmy's gap-toothed smile devouring the camera. The band were also rewarded with the front cover of *Sounds* magazine, and a half-hour live broadcast on Radio 1 in May of a raucous, no-frills concert from London's Paris Theatre. The day after that they played their first show abroad, in front of a curious and mostly stunned audience in France at the Palais D'Hiver in Lyons.

A second single from the album was released. *No Class* was a three amigos 'original' that was essentially a rewrite of ZZ Top's *Tush*, itself essentially a rewrite of every 12-bar blues boogie ever invented. But it was not a significant hit.

Lemmy didn't care, though. He was too busy revelling in his newfound success. The drugs and drinking, though, were a given come rain or shine. What increased now, he said, was the sudden uptake in new female admirers. Not that he was choosy. On the road, at the end of another long night of not sleeping, "that's when everybody becomes good-looking, or at least manageable. But sometimes it's like there's the last chicken in the shop, and you don't seem to be able to help yourself. It's like having an out-of-body experience. You see yourself chatting up this dragon, and you know you're doing it, but you still do it."

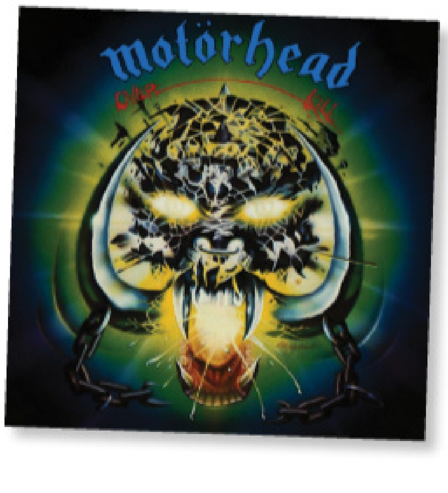
This was another new feature the *Overkill* era ushered in: Lemmy no longer seen as just a hoary old biker, but a genuine babe-magnet. "I believe in marriage," he was quoted in the press as saying at the time, big gap-toothed grin in place, "but I can never be faithful. There's just too many other beautiful birds out there. It doesn't seem fair not to at least have a shot at getting me."

What Lemmy was less inclined to talk about was how he had been involved in more than one serious relationship with a woman, only to run a mile when things got too serious.

"No, it wasn't him, being with the same girl forever," said Clarke, confirming the impression of Lemmy the eternal loner. "When I was in the band he'd already made up his mind. He had his son, we knew about Paul. But he hated [Paul's mother] Tracey for fucking doing it to him. He was angry about that. Then he had a girl called Jeanette who was giving him an awful lot of trouble."

In the late-70s, Lemmy had been living with Jeanette in a squat in Battersea. According to Clarke, "they had some terrible fights. I think she just used to wind him up. As women do, you know. And he just got fucked off with it in the end. He nearly fucking strangled her once. And I think he thought that's enough of this, you know. He got so angry! I remember being there. He got so fucking angry with her, I thought fucking hell! Women have the ability to do this. He said: 'I ain't fucking doing that no more.'"

Clarke and Taylor were no different. "To be honest, the three of us. It's why we were so perfect," said Clarke. "Apart from him having Paul, none of us had any kids or anything. We never settled down. We were what we were. That's why we were so right for each other. That's the joke. We were so right for each other, how it got broken I don't fucking know. I've asked myself the question so many times."



At the same time as Motörhead were being heralded as one of the coming men of what *Sounds* had recently dubbed the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal, Lemmy was becoming equally familiar to the real new ▷

MAIN: CAMERA PRESS/PAUL SLATTERY; INSET: REX/SHUTTERSTOCK

Motörhead at the Reading Festival, August 24, 1979.

wave crowd, who also ate speed for breakfast and detected in Motörhead a no-shit gang of do-badders not totally unlike themselves.

The punk association came about, Lemmy said, because "we did actually hang out and play together. I saw an old advert once from one of the music papers that the fan club had reprinted, and it was for a gig at the Roundhouse in 1979, when *Overkill* was just released, and the bill is The Damned, Motörhead and The Adverts. The Damned would get bottles thrown at them by our fans, we got bottles thrown at us by their fans, and The Adverts got bottles thrown at them by everybody.

"It was a good bill. But it also showed what we were up for. I always thought we had more in common with The Damned than with Judas Priest. The only reason we were thought of as a heavy metal band was because of our hair. Though I never thought much of The Jam, actually," he adds as an aside. "I always thought Paul Weller was a boring little shit. As he still is today. Just a more influential boring little shit."

Lemmy recalled trying to talk to Weller at the Music Machine in Camden one night in 1979, "sitting on one of those pool tables at the back. Two or three minutes into it and I thought: 'Fucking hell, I can't talk to this guy for long.' He was having 'such a hard time' and 'Ooh, it's so tough…' Fucking miserable little creep. I'd much rather talk to [Captain] Sensible."

In fact Lemmy did more than just talk to the Captain. With The Damned now signed to Chiswick Records, who had put out the first Motörhead album, a plan was hatched with Bronze to release a double A-side Motörhead-Damned single. Studio time was booked, but it all came to nought when Lemmy baulked at the idea of recording a cover of the Sweet hit *Ballroom Blitz* for their side of the single. (The Damned were to have recorded a Motörhead song for their side.) "So in the end we just had to trash the place," Clarke shrugged. "Lemmy smashed something in the toilet and they sent us a bill for a hundred quid."

> **"I like to read books. Just because we like very loud music doesn't mean we don't enjoy quieter moments."**
>
> **Lemmy**

In August 1979, the same month Motörhead made their first appearance at the Reading Festival, third on the bill below headliners The Tourists and The Police, a mammoth, groundbreaking article on the band appeared in *NME*. Written by one of the paper's alumni, and fellow knight of Notting Hill, Chis Salewicz, it was the first really serious in-depth look into what made Lemmy, the now 34-year-old suddenly budding rock, star tick.

It was a substantial piece, far from the "worst band in the world" taunt made by Nick Kent in the same paper just two years before. As such it signified a cornerstone moment in the Motörhead story. No longer a joke, they were now leading the way for a whole as-yet unborn generation of speed-metal bands to follow.

When Salewicz, who believed in the sacramental value of weed and hash, suggested that speed was, well, "bad for your head, man", Lemmy, naturally, begged to differ. "It doesn't kill your soul, though, does it?" he said. "Hopefully not, anyway, but it doesn't half kill your body."

Salewicz also tackled Lemmy about the Hells Angels, which he accurately described as "part of Lemmy's Hawkwind inheritance." Lemmy was proud of the connection. "It's a very rigidly organised set-up," he said. "Sure, it can be very negative in some ways, but it can be very positive in others. They're good lads, you know. As an alternative to disco-dancing, you must admit it has its merits."

Salewicz also mentioned the time he had visited a squat Lemmy was living in. During the course of the evening he was shown Lemmy's room (he was out at the time). In one corner was a pile of weighty tomes on the Third Reich. "I remember smiling, though, when I glanced at the open book next to Lemmy's bed," Salewicz recalled. "What Lemmy was really reading was a novel by PG Wodehouse. That, I recall thinking, says it all."

There, in 1979, was Lemmy and Motörhead's future in capsule form: hard and fast and utterly uncompromising like *Overkill*, while at the same time underpinned by a sensibility that was dry and funny and witty and not at all as it was supposed to be.

Or, as Lemmy growled in his Ladbroke Grove abode: "Shut up and pass the ashtray."

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BLAZING APOSTLES

Rising from playing Working Men's Clubs in Yorkshire to US tours with Lynyrd Skynyrd, **Be-Bop Deluxe** were an arty enigma in mid-70s rock'n'roll. Mastermind Bill Nelson reflects on a life of musical adventures, flaming guitars and taking glam to shocked "hard, butch miners".

Words: **Rob Hughes**

How do you solve a problem like Be-Bop Deluxe? That was the issue facing industry types and critics during the 1970s. The band were too savvy for rock'n'roll, too sleek for traditional prog, too complex for punk. They had hit singles they didn't want, toured America with wholly incompatible acts and created pyrotechnical stage shows devised by the most reluctant of guitar-toting frontmen. In short, they were the decade's biggest enigma.

"We had some problems with the old guard in that things had to be clearly defined back then," explains the band's founder, guitarist, vocalist and songwriter, Bill Nelson. "We'd be pulling in all kinds of directions, not just from album to album or song to song, but within one piece of music. It made it very difficult for some people to grasp what we were about. We were a postmodern rock band."

Across five studio albums, Be-Bop Deluxe blurred the battle lines between glam, art-rock and prog, offering a scintillating fusion that pointed to an unscripted future. Visionary works like *Sunburst Finish* and *Drastic Plastic* pre-empted the new wave of post-punk and beyond. Just as crucially, in Nelson they had the embodiment of the modern guitar hero; a riff lord of sophistication, guile and consummate ability.

A former art-school student from Wakefield, his conceptual lyrics recycled pop culture in much the same way as those of David Bowie or Roxy Music, soaking up references from sci-fi, Pop Art and Expressionist cinema. "The Pop Art thing was emerging when I was at college in the mid sixties," he says. "And that was part of the idea I had for Be-Bop Deluxe, to take the commercial pop and rock aspects and set them in a different context, to make people think and question it. Duane Eddy was the first guitarist I ever took notice of, then jazz players like Django Reinhardt and Wes Montgomery. The avant garde came into play when I discovered John Cage and the Fluxus movement. So they were all swimming around in my head and somehow came to bear on the music."

> **"My guitar tech poured lighter fluid over my guitar and set it on fire. We did it at the Drury Lane Theatre Royal and got banned."**
>
> **Bill Nelson**

Nelson was working as a local government officer when he recorded his first solo album, *Northern Dream*, in 1971. A year later he and fellow employee Richard Brown started casting around for musicians to start a band. Be-Bop Deluxe quickly became known on the local club scene, although more for their visuals than for the music.

"It was never intended to be anything more than fun," Nelson says, laughing. "We were playing in Working Men's Clubs and pubs around Yorkshire, so putting on the glam-rock thing was kind of subversive. These hard, butch miners would be quite shocked by us. And we enjoyed that idea of getting up people's noses. Instead of getting changed back into our street clothes at the end of a gig, we'd get in the van in our glam gear, with all the make-up still on, and stop off at a fish and chip shop. The looks we'd get were priceless."

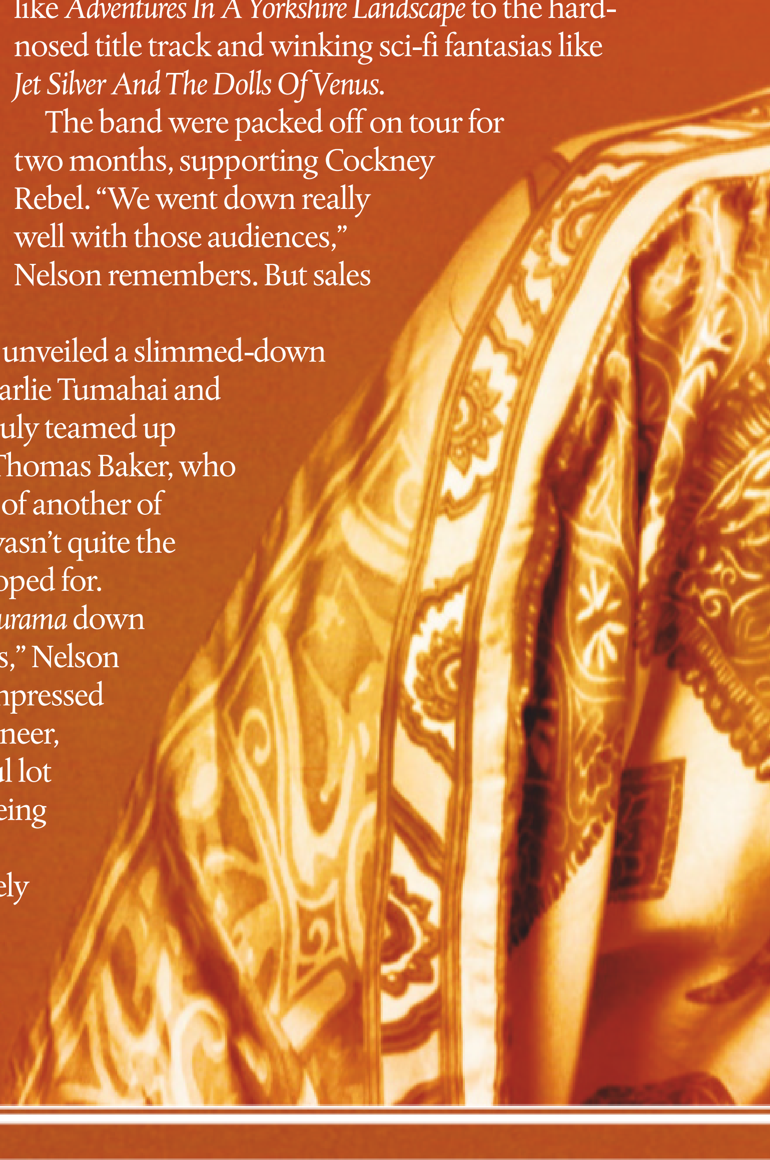
In the meantime, John Peel had become smitten with *Northern Dream* and played the whole record on his radio show in one go. EMI got wind of the album, too, and told Nelson they'd like him to re-record it with some choice session players. "At that point, I'd just started Be-Bop Deluxe and we were only about two weeks old as a group," Nelson says. "I told them: 'Actually, I've got a band now, so it's not like that any more.'"

EMI were initially uncertain about Nelson's new venture, but a storming gig at London's Marquee in March 1974 persuaded the label to sign them up. Be-Bop Deluxe were promptly put on Harvest, the label's progressive arm, and put in the studio to record their debut, *Axe Victim*. Largely comprised of songs road-tested for more than a year, the album veered from proggish reveries like *Adventures In A Yorkshire Landscape* to the hard-nosed title track and winking sci-fi fantasias like *Jet Silver And The Dolls Of Venus.*

The band were packed off on tour for two months, supporting Cockney Rebel. "We went down really well with those audiences," Nelson remembers. But sales of *Axe Victim* were modest.

For the follow-up, Nelson unveiled a slimmed-down new line-up, with bassist Charlie Tumahai and drummer Simon Fox. EMI duly teamed up Be-Bop with producer Roy Thomas Baker, who was then shaping the sound of another of EMI's bands, Queen. But it wasn't quite the harmonious union they'd hoped for.

"We recorded most of *Futurama* down at Rockfield Studios in Wales," Nelson explains. "I was incredibly impressed by Roy Thomas Baker's engineer, Pat Moran. I learned an awful lot just by watching him and seeing what he could do with the studio. But I wasn't completely overwhelmed by Roy. He would sit in an armchair by the mixing desk and go: ▷



Be-Bop's best-known line-up: (l-r) Charlie Tumahai, Bill Nelson, Simon Fox, Andy Clark.

"I think this glam look maybe needs a tweak…" Be-Bop Deluxe in 1973.

'Wakey wakey! Roly poly!' And he'd organise food fights, which he seemed to believe was fun. He also set fire to the mixing desk by pouring sugar on it, then lighting it with a match. I thought: 'This is public-schoolboy nonsense.'

"There was one occasion when we were at Sarm Studios in London, doing overdubs," Nelson continues. "I asked for a bit more level for my vocals with the headphones and, 'for a joke', Roy turned it up full blast. I had to throw the headphones off, because my ears were nearly bleeding. I said to him: 'Look, if you don't stop this messing about, you're off!' I read an interview with him afterwards where he called me a prima donna. But this was our second album, and I really wanted it to be perfect, whereas this guy was just pratting about."

Despite the less than ideal circumstances, *Futurama*, released in July '75, contained several Be-Bop gems. *Sister Seagull* and *Stage Whispers* were fluid examples of Nelson's foraging art, streaked with forceful guitar runs. Brightest of all was *Maid In Heaven*, a near-perfect single that deserved to be a monster hit. "That's definitely one of my favourite ever Be-Bop tracks," Nelson says. "It's so succinct."

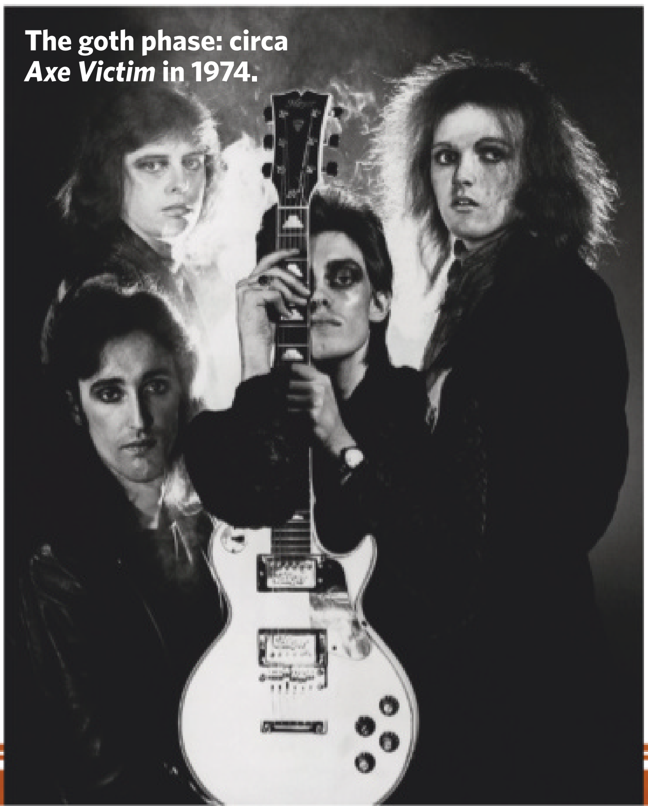
Be-Bop Deluxe were back in the studio by the end of the year, this time with keyboard player Andy Clark on board. Keen not to repeat the mistake of *Futurama*, Nelson insisted that he produce the album himself this time. EMI, in turn, forced a compromise, stipulating that he team up with Abbey Road engineer John Leckie, who was ready to make the leap to producer. "John had actually engineered some of *Axe Victim*," Nelson recalls. "We had lunch together in St. John's Wood and decided we could do it between us. It turned out to be a really good working relationship."

The resulting album, *Sunburst Finish*, issued in early '76, was a masterpiece. Nelson had hit an early peak as a songwriter, displaying a renewed level of artistry and confidence, while the band were a perfect compliment to his formidable guitar playing.

As befits the final piece of a guitar-nerd trilogy set up by *Axe Victim* and *Futurama*, *Sunburst Finish* includes a searing tribute to Jimi Hendrix on the eloquent *Crying To The Sky*. "I'd seen Hendrix on *Ready Steady Go!*, making his first TV appearance in this country [December 16, 1966], where he played a guitar solo with his teeth," Nelson remembers. "It was a Friday night, and I met my mates afterwards at the local Mecca dance hall. We just sat and talked about it all night, because it was so mind-blowing."

"We were playing in Working Men's Clubs and pubs, so putting on the glam-rock thing was kind of subversive."

Bill Nelson

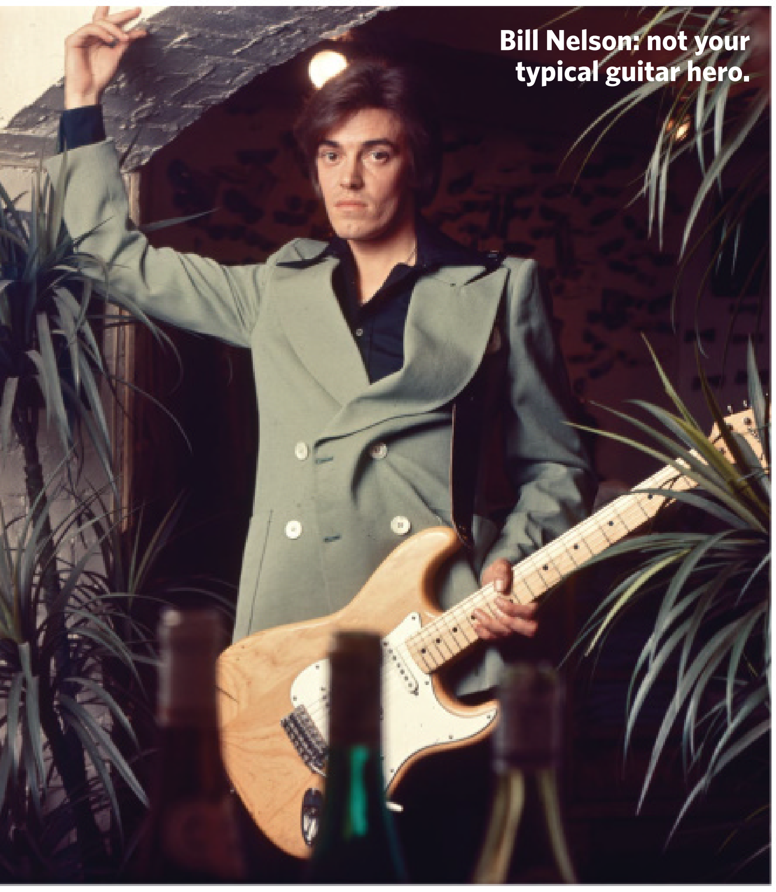


The goth phase: circa *Axe Victim* in 1974.

Sunburst Finish also yielded a Top 30 single, *Ships In The Night*. With its airy synth and reggae-ish lilt, it was written partly to placate EMI, who'd asked him for anything that might sound like a pop hit.

"I kind of wrote it tongue-in-cheek, thinking that this wasn't great," Nelson says, with a tinge of regret. "But it was a hit. It has its place, but it's probably my least favourite Be-Bop Deluxe number. I thought that maybe I hadn't completely stuck to my principles with that song. At the same time, it did a lot of good for us. It opened up a certain area for the band, and people started to investigate the album as a result."

Sunburst Finish itself went Top 20 in Britain, bolstered by an extensive tour on which Nelson's conceptual stage ideas reached full fruition. *Life In The Air Age* was accompanied by footage of Fritz Lang's pre-war sci-fi classic *Metropolis*. There were tracer lights, transparent tubes from which the band would emerge, and vast projections of pulp magazine covers, while Nelson had become a stage guitarist to equal any of his contemporaries. The show climaxed with him striking a pose with guitar aloft, similar to the one by the nude model on the album's sleeve, before it burst into sacrificial flame.



Bill Nelson: not your typical guitar hero.

“We had a guitar made for us – a cheap one, but it looked like my Gibson – and rigged by a special-effects department to put an incendiary device in it,” Nelson explains. “It’d worked fine in rehearsal, but on the first night, for some reason, it didn’t light when I flicked the switch during the gig. So my guitar tech took a leaf out of Hendrix’s performance at Monterey by pouring lighter fluid all over it and setting it on fire. We did it at the Drury Lane Theatre Royal and got banned.”

Equally memorable, although for a different reason, were the band’s first tours of the US that year. As a measure of EMI’s inability to fathom the band, Be-Bop Deluxe were sent out with Lynyrd Skynyrd, Ted Nugent and Blue Öyster Cult.

“Skynyrd were really good to us,” Nelson recalls, “but the others were difficult. We were basically blanked by Ted Nugent and his people. Nugent was a strange guy. When we were between gigs on planes and the rest of it, his whole look would change. He would put glasses on and hunch up, like a little old man. Then he’d get on to the stage and his hair would be wild, and he’d be jumping over the amps. It was mad.”

Back home, the breakthrough success of *Ships In The Night* and *Sunburst Finish* had given Be-Bop Deluxe a wider audience. Follow-up album *Modern Music*, released in September ’76, stopped just shy of the Top 10. But Nelson was ambivalent about his new-found status as a commercial proposition. Frustrated with audiences who just wanted to hear songs from Be-Bop’s back catalogue, rather than anything forward-facing, he decided to move on.

“I’d wanted to disband Be-Bop after *Modern Music*,” he reveals. “I’d suggested to our management company that I wanted to form a different band and try to do something else. I already had some ideas in mind. But I was persuaded by management and the record company to just make one more album, then they’d let me go. So we did *Drastic Plastic*.”

Released in February 1978, the album signalled a marked shift in the Be-Bop sound. The songs were more urgent and direct, with a greater emphasis on electronica and studio innovation. Many of its embryonic ideas would feed into Nelson’s next project, Red Noise. “There was certainly some of that gated snare drum sound, which had appeared on Bowie’s stuff, on *Drastic Plastic*,” he explains. “And we were creating tape loops of drums and so on. It also featured one of the first guitar/synthesisers in the country, a thing called the Hagström Patch 2000, which you could use to trigger notes.” His mission complete, Nelson then broke up the band.

These days, the 70-year-old Nelson seems busier than ever, maintaining a solo career that runs into dozens upon dozens of albums. He releases several a year (through his Dreamsville website) to a devoted fan base who’ve mostly been with him since the Be-Bop days. His latest is the triple-disc *Auditoria*, and he has others ready to go. “I think I’ve got it down to ten unreleased albums at the moment,” he says in his soft Yorkshire brogue, at his home studio just outside York.

Nelson admits to not being fully conversant with current music trends, although fans assure him that the music he made with Be-Bop Deluxe hasn’t dated much, if at all. A spanking new remastered *Deluxe Edition* of *Sunburst Finish*, with bonus tracks and live tracks from the BBC archive, plus videos, has afforded him the opportunity to look back at his 70s career. It’s not something he does readily, preferring instead to push on with his next project, but it’s a legacy that he’s quietly proud of nonetheless.

Treasured by guitarists such as Stuart Adamson, John McGeoch and Steve Jones back in the day – and a key influence on a newer breed of left-field practitioners that includes Earth and Sunn O))) – Nelson remains an atypical axe hero. “To be honest, I’ve always felt more comfortable as a studio person, rather than on stage,” he reflects. “I’ve loved the guitar ever since I was ten years old, when I first started playing it, and it’s such a big part of my life. But it wasn’t just about playing riffs, there was other stuff going on as well. I did want success for Be-Bop, and I hoped it would be more on our terms. It was all about taking you on an adventure.”

Sunburst Finish Deluxe Edition is out now via Esoteric Recordings.

Suiting up: Be-Bop in 1977.

“I’ve always felt more comfortable as a studio person than on stage.”

Bill Nelson

FIVE ESSENTIAL BE-BOP BEAUTIES

AXE VICTIM

***Axe Victim*, 1974**

This dazzling guitar showcase takes glam-rock to a rarified other level, while Nelson’s lyrics suggest he was already uncomfortable with his role as stage idol.

MAID IN HEAVEN

***Futurama*, 1975**

With fully flexed rock chops and its to-die-for melody, this is arguably the band’s greatest moment. Bizarrely, it only scratched the UK Top 40. Go figure.

BLAZING APOSTLES

***Sunburst Finish*, 1976**

Five minutes of labyrinthine thrills, from expansive prog to primal rock’n’roll and a brief, affectionate tribute to the great Duane Eddy.

CRYING TO THE SKY

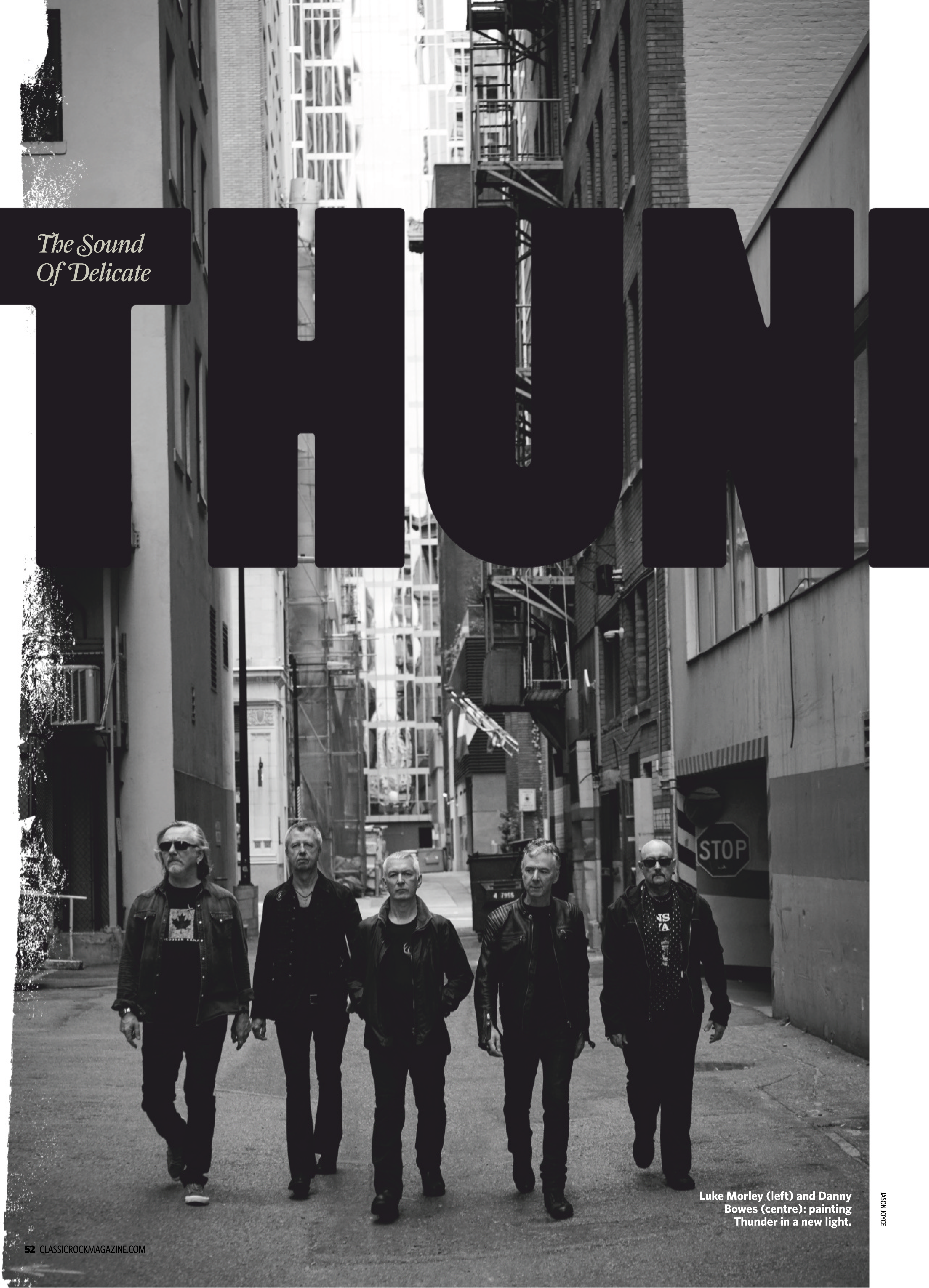
***Sunburst Finish*, 1976**

A roaring tribute to one of Nelson’s prime influences, Jimi Hendrix, topped off by a truly grandstanding guitar solo.

LOVE IN FLAMES

***Drastic Plastic*, 1978**

Amid an album dominated by electronic textures, Nelson delivers an untamed rocker that’s as fierce as anything in his back catalogue.



The Sound Of Delicate

THUN

Luke Morley (left) and Danny Bowes (centre): painting Thunder in a new light.

JASON JOYCE

As **Thunder** prepare to release an album of some of their own songs reimagined in an unfamiliar way, band leaders Danny Bowes and Luke Morley talk Frank Sinatra, swampy blues, going a bit 'jazz club' and playing golf with Scott Gorham.

Words: **Dave Ling**

DER

Thunder's twelfth studio album is an album with a difference. Dipping into rock, blues, jazz and soul, *Please Remain Seated* sees the Londoners reworking and reimagining material from a catalogue built up over the past 30 years. Vocalist Danny Bowes and guitarist Luke Morley explain the reasons behind the change in direction, and preview a nine-date UK tour in February.

Whose was the idea for the concept for *Please Remain Seated?*
Danny Bowes: It came from the fans who wanted a version of *Love Walked In* that could be played at a wedding without damaging their granny's hearing. We resisted that for years, but ended up giving it a try. Luke wrote a whole new arrangement featuring a recorder.
Luke Morley: I'd taken a lot of drugs that day [laughs]. So after deciding to try a few more we picked about thirty songs, the only stipulation being that they had to be very different from the original. It was a bit like jumping off a cliff.

Of those you chose to re-record, did some work out and others not?
Danny: A few of them, yeah. We went round and round with them and finally reached the conclusion: this is shit. So we chucked them away.

Are you going to tell us which?
Danny: *Until My Dying Day* was among them. We tried and tried but it was too much like the original, just a quiet version, and that was the last thing we wanted.

Were you trying to make a point to anyone who thinks they've got Thunder pigeonholed?
Luke: There was a degree of that. Somebody might think: "Ah yes, good old Thunder with their bluesy riffs and singalong choruses." So yeah, it was good to escape our comfort zone.

When would be the optimum time to listen to this album – is it a Sunday-morning record?
Danny: That's a good question. My favourite Sunday-morning album is by Frank Sinatra, and ours isn't a million miles away. It's very stylish.
Luke: This is as close as we'll ever get to Frank Sinatra, that's for sure [both laugh].

The stripped-down treatment of *Future Train,* Thunder's most socially aware song, emphasises the message of the lyrics: *'I see a leader with an agenda to hide…/…fanning the flames of this confusion'*.
Luke: I like the fact that you can really hear the words. It's really topical, isn't it? It could have been written last week.

> **"It was good to escape our comfort zone."**
> **Luke Morley**

***Girl's Going Out Of Her Head* now has a jazz club, lounge-flavoured feel. You can almost see John Thompson's *Fast Show* character turning to the camera and smiling: "Nice."**
Luke: I can assure you that catchphrase was used many, many times in the studio.

The gospel approach suits *Just Another Suicide* and *Miracle Man* really well.
Luke: I'm particularly pleased with *Miracle Man*. When I wrote it I considered it a really interesting song, and I think it works better in this format than as a straight-up hard rock track. It has that whole swampy blues thing going on.

You're going to perform these songs with their new arrangements on the February UK tour.
Danny: It's not unplugged and it's not a typical Thunder show, it'll be somewhere between the two – Luke is playing electric guitar all over the place.
Luke: But we will be sitting down.

What challenges does that present?
Luke: It's a good question. Six months ago I started planning for the show's construction. When there is no upturn in volume it's a case of maximising what we do have and realising that less can be more. How quiet can you take things to make the big bits bigger? Having an extra piano player and a couple of girl singers gives us a lot more scope.

Dan Reed is doing a one-man support spot.
Luke: Both of us saw Dan Reed Network play the Marquee Club in 1988. They looked great and played even better. We were blown away.

Luke, you recently played some shows with Black Star Riders in South America as a stand-in for Damon Johnson.
Luke: It wasn't exactly a punishing schedule – six forty-five-minute shows in eight days! I really enjoyed playing guitar with no other responsibility. Scott Gorham and I play golf together a lot, so it was like a paid vacation.

Under similar circumstances, who would dep for you in Thunder?
Danny: It couldn't happen.
Luke: Not because I'm the best guitarist in the world, because I'm not, but I don't think anyone else could take on my role. It's easy to be a second guitar player [with Black Star Riders], but being a musical director is a whole other job. Danny and I have played together for forty-three fucking years, and so much goes unsaid between us.

What will be happening for Thunder throughout the rest of 2019?
Danny: Some festivals in the summer that I can't talk about yet, and then we'll make another album. Luke already has some songs, and some studio time is booked, so we'll get that out in 2020.

Picture the scene: you visit a fortune teller in 1989, and she tells you that Thunder will get to celebrate their thirtieth anniversary. How might you have responded?
Danny: We'd have laughed our tits off.
Luke: Frankly, I'd have been delighted that I was still alive in 2019.
Danny: You can't possibly know that a band will last that long, so you don't really think about it. You make hay while the sun shines, don't you?

Could Thunder manage forty years together?
Luke: So long as no important appendages drop off, I don't see why not.
Danny: If everybody's got the strength and the will to keep on doing this, then I'd like to think it's possible.

Please Remain Seated is out now via BMG. Thunder's tour commences in Cardiff on February 1.

ALAMY

ORCHESTRAL MANOEUVRES IN THE DARK

Despite having little idea of where they were going or what they wanted to do, and working for the first time with a soundtrack composer, *Atom Heart Mother* gave **Pink Floyd** their first No.1 hit. *Classic Rock* looks back at the tortuous creation of one of the band's most overlooked but important releases.

Words: **Mark Blake**

It was summer 1970, and LG Wood, managing director of EMI's Record Division, was peering at the cover of Pink Floyd's new album, *Atom Heart Mother.* It was EMI policy for Wood to sign off on all EMI album sleeves, but here was a cover without a title and the group's name. Instead it was just a cow in a field. Presuming there were words *somewhere,* Wood turned the sleeve over, only to find more cows. According to one eyewitness, "Ah, Friesians" was all the baffled MD could muster.

Three months later, *Atom Heart Mother* became Pink Floyd's first No.1 album. EMI's powers that be already knew that strange-sounding hairy rock groups sold lots of records. Now, it seemed, they could do so without including their name or the album title on the cover. Just a cow. In a field.

Pink Floyd's gargantuan seven-volume box set, *The Early Years 1965-1972,* released in 2016, might have dedicated an entire volume, *Devi/Ation,* to *Atom Heart Mother* and the *Zabriskie Point* soundtrack that inspired its title track, and included the earliest known recording of the *AHM* suite. But today, *Atom Heart Mother* is probably better known for the cow than the music.

Revisiting the album now is like entering a parallel universe inhabited by epic orchestral suites and songs created from the sounds of boiling kettles and frying bacon.

Pink Floyd would make better albums, but *Atom Heart Mother* remains the apotheosis of their experimental era – or as guitarist David Gilmour later described it, "our weird shit".

An album that ended with a cow in a field in Potters Bar, Hertfordshire began more than a year before in Rome. Italian director Michelangelo Antonioni had commissioned Pink Floyd to score his next film, *Zabriskie Point.* They arrived in Rome to start recording in November '69.

Antonioni's 1966 movie *Blow-Up* had been a clumsy portrayal of Swinging London, and *Zabriskie Point* was a drama about US student radicals fighting 'the man', blowing stuff up and having lots of sex.

The early Pink Floyd embraced the unexpected and the concept of being, as drummer Nick Mason put it, "more than just a pop group". They'd stopped releasing singles after December 1968 and had followed their second album, that year's *A Saucerful Of Secrets,* with a soundtrack for the art house movie *More.*

Floyd's next release, 1969's half-studio/half-live double album *Ummagumma,* included Roger Waters's musique concrète experiment, *Several Species Of Small Furry Animals Gathered Together In A Cave And Grooving With A Pict.* The piece was fashioned out of found sounds, with its composer ranting in a Scottish accent. ➢

***Atom Heart Mother* collaborator Ron Geesin.**

‘There are moments on *Atom Heart Mother* when you get a taste of what Pink Floyd would soon achieve on *Meddle* and *The Dark Side Of The Moon.*’

Zabriskie Point was the next stage on Floyd’s varied musical journey, but the band quickly discovered that Antonioni was an impossible taskmaster. “We did some great stuff,” insisted Waters. However, the director, worried that their music would overpower his film, criticised everything: “You’d change whatever was wrong and he’d still be unhappy. It was hell.”

Floyd lasted two weeks in Rome and then came home. *Zabriskie Point* was released in February 1970 and was a resounding flop. The soundtrack included just three Floyd tracks, padded out with songs by the Grateful Dead, among others. However, Floyd’s discarded out-takes contained a musical sequence around which the *Atom Heart Mother* suite would evolve.

“Dave [Gilmour] came up with the original riff,” Waters told Capital Radio DJ Nicky Horne. “We all listened to it and thought, ‘Oh, that’s quite nice…’ But we all thought the same thing, which was that it sounds like a theme from some awful western.”

It’s believed Pink Floyd performed the first version of their new instrumental on January 17, 1970 at the Lawns Centre in Hull. But they were still undecided on their next recording project.

“We’re going to do the music for an Alan Aldridge TV cartoon series called *Rollo,*” Waters announced in *Melody Maker*. “It’s rather *Yellow Submarine*-ish, about a little boy in space.”

But Waters never mentioned *Rollo* again. Instead, Pink Floyd entered EMI’s Abbey Road studios in early March to begin recording their new work. EMI had just installed state-of-the-art eight-track recorders that used a specific one-inch tape. The company insisted this tape was not to be spliced and used for edits, which meant Waters and Mason had the unenviable task of recording the backing track for their new composition in one 23.44-minute take. “It demanded the full range of our limited musicianship,” Mason said in his memoir, *Inside Out*.

All smiles in 1971, having had their first ever No.1 with *Atom Heart Mother*: (l-r) Roger Waters, Nick Mason, David Gilmour, Richard Wright.

Pink Floyd had been playing the piece live for some weeks by now, tweaking the arrangement. “We added, subtracted and multiplied the elements,” said Mason. “But it still seemed to lack an essential something.”

The band eventually decided that the missing ‘something’ was an orchestra and a choir. But first they needed someone to write a score.

Enter Ron Geesin, an Ayrshire-born banjo player, pianist, poet and writer. Geesin had started his career in a jazz band in the early 60s. By 1970 he was composing TV soundtracks in his basement flat/studio in Notting Hill.

Mason met Geesin through a mutual friend, the Rolling Stones’ tour manager Sam Jonas Cutler. Geesin wasn’t familiar with Floyd’s music. And when he did hear some, he wasn’t impressed. “I called it ‘astral wanderings’,” he said.

Geesin also preferred opera to most rock’n’roll, and he took Mason, Gilmour and keyboard player Rick Wright to hear Wagner’s *Parsifal* at Covent Garden. “I think it’s significant that they all fell asleep,” he grumbled.

Still, Geesin was the obvious choice to compose the score. He and Waters were already writing music for a scientific documentary called *The Body*. Between them they crafted a soundtrack from conventional instruments and ‘human noises’

INSET: REX/SHUTTERSTOCK

such as breathing, talking and farting. *Atom Heart Mother* would offer a similar fusion of ordinary and extraordinary sounds.

Talking in 2006, Geesin said Pink Floyd had only the vaguest idea of what they wanted. "As far as I can remember, Dave talked to me about the theme and Rick came round to my studio and we went through a few phrases for the vocal section. The Floyd then went off to play in America and left me to get on with it."

Geesin composed his score in the midst of a heatwave, "stripped down to my underpants" in his Notting Hill basement. This half-naked Scotsman would play a vital role in Pink Floyd's next album.

MAIN: GETTY

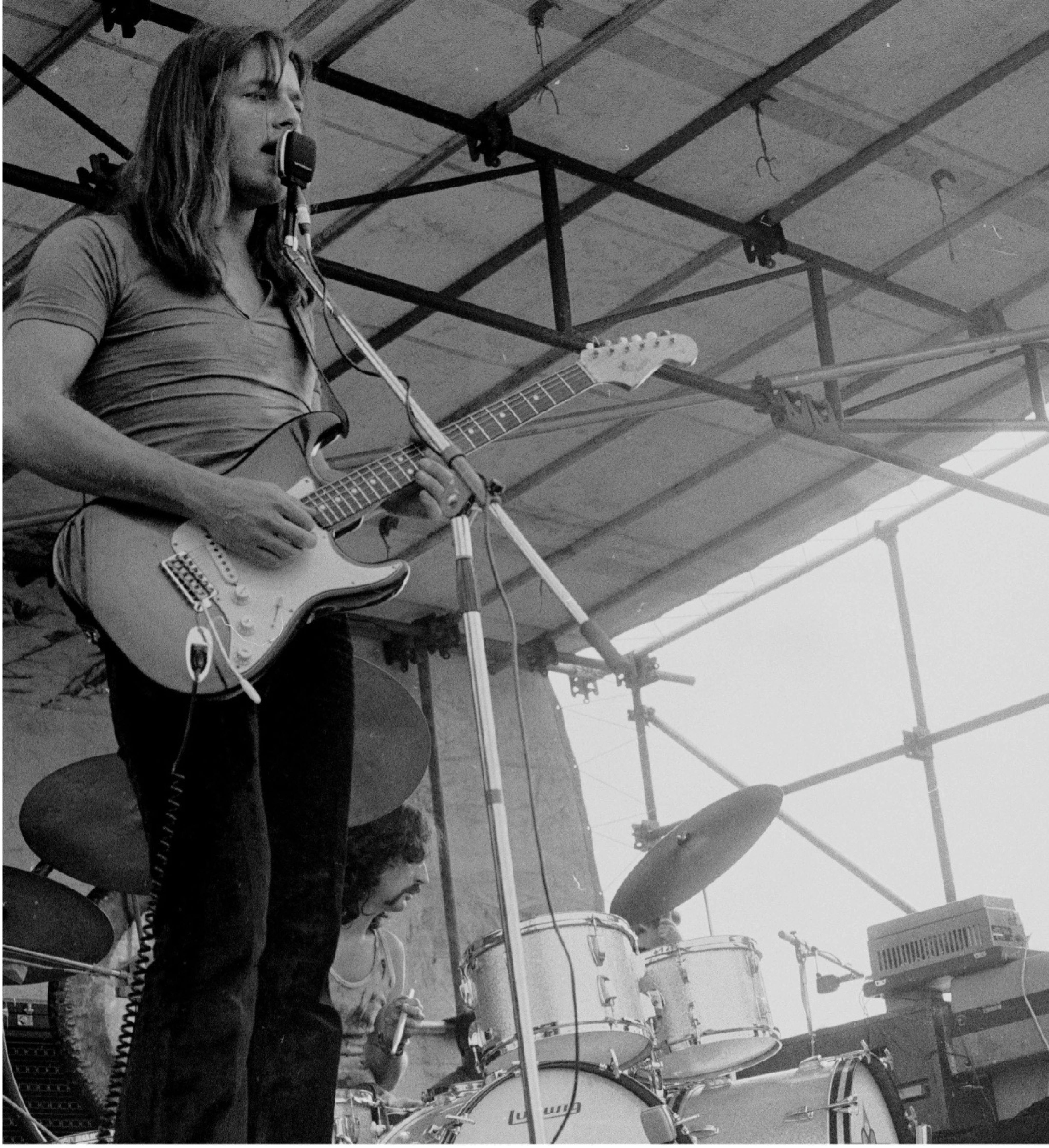
The early 1970s were a challenging time for classical session musicians – it was as if every long-haired rock group wanted cellos and tubas on their records. First The Beatles, then The Moody Blues, The Nice and Deep Purple. Now Pink Floyd.

Ron Geesin had just recorded a TV commercial with members of the New Philharmonic Orchestra, and they'd treated him with respect. But when Geesin and the Floyd reconvened at Abbey Road in June, the EMI Pops Orchestra regarded Ron as another clueless hippie, and made the session as difficult as possible. It didn't help that an error in the score meant the first beat of the bar was absent, rendering it almost unplayable.

"For the more experienced director, it would have been considered a normal display of nerves and status-jostling and would have been put in its place," Geesin said. "But I was a novice. I was not a conductor. You'd ask the EMI players a question and it was all, 'You tell us… I don't understand.' One of the horn players was especially mouthy."

When Geesin threatened to hit the mouthy horn player, he was told to leave. "They removed me," he explained.

Geesin's replacement was conductor John Alldis, a respected choral scholar. The contrary session musicians quickly fell in line, while Alldis's choir contributed the track's haunted-sounding, wordless vocals. ▷



Waters's description of the *Atom Heart Mother* suite's opening movement (later titled *Father's Shout*) as "plodding" is apt. But three minutes in, the plodding ends and Gilmour's slide guitar takes over, underpinning Icelandic session man Hafliði Hallgrímsson's lovely, mournful cello. In moments such as these you get a taste of what Pink Floyd would soon achieve on *Meddle* and *The Dark Side Of The Moon*.

On the fourth movement, *Funky Dung*, the guitar and Hammond organ play lazy tag on what sounds like a precursor to *Any Colour You Like*. The choir's gospel-like vocals evoke those later heard on *Eclipse*. Geesin and Waters's *Give Birth To A Smile*, from the soundtrack for *The Body* and included on *The Early Years*, also used female backing vocals, alongside the rest of an uncredited Pink Floyd.

Meanwhile, the suite's fifth section, *Mind Your Throats Please*, merged Nick Mason's distorted voice shouting "Silence in the studio!" with the sound of Rick Wright's piano played through a Leslie speaker cabinet, a trick later used on *Echoes*.

Perhaps inevitably, Geesin was frustrated by the finished article. Under John Alldis's direction, the brass had become softer, less aggressive. "It wasn't how I'd envisaged it," Geesin said, before conceding: "It was a good compromise."

On June 27, Pink Floyd played the Bath Festival Of Blues And Progressive Music, joined by Alldis's choir and the Philip Jones Brass Ensemble. They didn't make it on stage until dawn, and Waters introduced their new suite as *The Amazing Pudding*. "It was a heavenly sound," claimed the reviewer in *Disc And Music Echo*. It was less heavenly for a tuba player who had a pint of beer tipped into his instrument before the show.

A month later, Pink Floyd were back at Abbey Road to record the album's second side. The creative freedom EMI allowed them seems unthinkable now, in the era of micro-managed, focus-group pop. Even though Floyd were producing themselves for the first time, any snooping EMI executive who turned up was given short shrift.

Pink Floyd headlining a free concert in London's Hyde Park, July 18, 1970.

GETTY

'Hipgnosis proposed putting a cow on the cover almost as a joke, but the band loved the idea.'

Tape operator Alan Parsons, who would later help engineer *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, recalled the time an executive dropped by the studio.

"Floyd had a general aversion to record company people," Parsons said. "An A&R guy showed up, and Roger and Ron said: 'We'll play you a bit of the album.'"

Prior to his arrival, they'd hidden a turntable under the desk and proceeded to play an old 78rpm disc through the studio speakers. The A&R man looked baffled and walked out. "But we were all unable to keep a straight face."

Nick Mason once said Pink Floyd "never threw any musical ideas away". Ron Geesin recalls the four songs on the album's second side developing from "scraps of things they had lying around". And long-time Floyd watchers know that the second side contains some buried treasure.

It's the lyrics that make Roger Waters's delicate ballad *If* so fascinating. *'If I were a good man I'd understand the spaces between friends,'* Waters declares. *'If I were alone I'd cry…'*

This was Floyd's imperious spokesman showing a softer side. "We all have our insecurities," said Ron Geesin. "I thought *If* was one of the brilliant gems."

After all, Waters, like the rest of Pink Floyd, hadn't forgotten Syd Barrett's forced departure. While they were making *Atom Heart Mother*, the fragile Barrett was recording his second solo album next door.

Geesin was there the day Barrett appeared in Floyd's studio. He sat on his hands, stared at his old bandmates for a few minutes and then disappeared. "He spun out again as quickly as he spun in."

Next up was Rick Wright's *Summer '68*, a song about a casual encounter with a groupie, featuring the EMI Pops Orchestra's buoyant brass. It's a very human song on an often alien-sounding album.

"In the summer of '68 there were groupies everywhere," said a wistful Wright. "They'd come and look after you like a personal maid… and leave you with a dose of the clap."

'Human' is also the key to David Gilmour's charming *Fat Old Sun*. A very English hymn to the wonders of *'summer evening birds'* and *'new mown grass'*, it suggests a snapshot of the Arcadian countryside set to music.

"It's fantastically overlooked," said Gilmour, who wanted the song included on the 2001 Floyd compilation *Echoes*. "Tried very hard to push the others… but they weren't having it."

The album ended with *Alan's Psychedelic Breakfast*, a meandering instrumental augmented by the sound of Floyd roadie Alan Styles cooking bacon, eggs and toast, and rendered in sumptuous quadrophonic sound. "One take went: 'Egg Frying Take One,' followed by, 'Whoops!' as the egg dropped," recalled Parsons.

"*Alan's Psychedelic Breakfast* is quite interesting," said Nick Mason, who considered the song his baby. "But in some ways, the sounds effects are the most interesting part."

"It was the most thrown-together thing we've ever done," remarked a rather dismissive Gilmour.

Fans would spend decades pondering what *Atom Heart Mother*'s filmic prog rock concerto, folky ballads and frying eggs actually *meant*. But nobody, including Pink Floyd, was entirely sure.

Hipgnosis's Storm Thorgerson and Aubrey 'Po' Powell, who were commissioned to create the cover artwork, didn't have a clue either. They proposed putting a cow on the cover almost as a joke, but the band loved the idea.

With its striking cover image in place, the group still needed a title for the album, and *The Amazing Pudding* failed to stick. Inspiration came on July 16, when Pink Floyd recorded a concert session for DJ John Peel (now included on *Devi/Ation*).

Former BBC producer Jeff Griffin was at the Beeb's Paris Cinema studio that night. "John was reading the *Evening Standard* and Roger was looking over his shoulder," Griffin revealed. "Peely said: 'Come on, what's the name of this piece? I bet you find something in the paper.'" ⊳

"Don't worry, I'm sure some people will turn up to see us soon..."

Also present was Ron Geesin, who insists it was he who told Waters to look in the newspaper. "I said: 'Your title's in there.'" And it was.

Waters leafed through the pages and stopped at a story headlined 'Atom Heart Mother Named', about a 56-year-old woman, who'd been fitted with a radioactive plutonium pacemaker. "Roger said: 'That's it! Atom Heart Mother!' Which had nothing whatsoever to do with the music," Griffin said, laughing. "We were saying: 'Why?' But the band said: 'Why not?'"

Two days later, Pink Floyd headlined over Roy Harper, Kevin Ayers, the Edgar Broughton Band and more at a free concert in London's Hyde Park. They performed *Atom Heart Mother,* again with the John Alldis Choir and the Philip Jones Brass Ensemble. But Ron Geesin walked out in tears. "The performance of the brass was terrible," he said.

Geesin had co-written *Atom Heart Mother,* but he had to let it make its own way in the world. Pink Floyd's manager Steve O'Rourke soon reminded him of the perpetual struggle between art and commerce. Geesin had divided his original score into movements, marked A to Q. "It was a practical necessity to see where I was going with the writing, but we all assumed it was one track."

O'Rourke told him that due to Floyd's US record deal the suite had to be divided into separately titled movements as quickly as possible: "Or else they'd only get paid publishing royalties on one song." Between them, Geesin and Pink Floyd carved the piece up into six movements. Geesin suggested the title *Father's Shout* after one of his heroes, US jazz pianist Earl 'Fatha' Hines. The group suggested other titles inspired by the 'cow' cover, including *Funky Dung* and *Breast Milky*. For monetary purposes, one song became six.

It turned out to be a shrewd move. Released on October 2, 1970, *Atom Heart Mother* reached No.1 in Britain, making it Floyd's biggest seller yet. *Beat Instrumental* described it as "an utterly fantastic record", and *Circus* magazine in the US (where it reached No.55) called it a "trip trip trip, a tippy top trip".

'The band members have often been critical of the title track. Waters called it "rubbish"; Gilmour once described it as "absolute crap".'

Soon after its release, film director Stanley Kubrick asked if he could use the suite in his forthcoming dystopian drama *A Clockwork Orange.* But Kubrick wanted to edit the piece, and Floyd refused. The LP sleeve made a fleeting appearance in the movie.

These days Ron Geesin has mixed feelings about his most famous work. His next major assignment after *AHM* was the score for director John Schlesinger's *Sunday Bloody Sunday*. Since then he has created sound and video installations and recorded some pioneering electronic music.

"I'd like to stand up and say: 'Look here, world! I've done two thousand pieces of work, some of which I think are much better than *Atom Heart Mother,* but no one has heard them."

It also bugged him a little that he was never given a co-credit on the album. "Though that was never discussed with the group," he explained.

The *Atom Heart Mother* suite became a fixture of Pink Floyd's live set throughout 1970 and '71, until deposed by their next side-long epic, *Echoes.* Roger Waters performed *If* on his early solo tours, and David Gilmour reprised *Fat Old Sun* for his 2006 *On An Island* tour. However, the band members have often been critical of the title track. Waters called it "rubbish"; Gilmour once described it as "absolute crap".

Still, time's a great healer. Gilmour joined Geesin to perform the suite at the 2008 Chelsea Festival, with cellist Caroline Dale, a chamber choir, brass players from the Royal College Of Music and an Italian Pink Floyd tribute band, Mun Floyd. Geesin resisted the temptation to tamper too much with the score beforehand. "It's a formed work," he said. "Don't poke it about too much or it'll fall apart."

Whatever misgivings Pink Floyd might have about *Atom Heart Mother,* the album turned out to be a crucial step along the road to their world-conquering *The Dark Side Of The Moon.* But it's more than that. *Atom Heart Mother* is a celebration of the wilfully experimental Pink Floyd. Before the big hits and the even bigger money, it's the sound of a contrary art-rock band making an ungodly racket in Abbey Road studios, while their EMI paymasters wondered what the hell they were doing.

Like that Friesian peering balefully from the record's front cover, the music on *Atom Heart Mother* challenges and confuses, but somehow draws you in. And nearly five decades on, Pink Floyd's "weird shit", as David Gilmour put it, has never sounded better.

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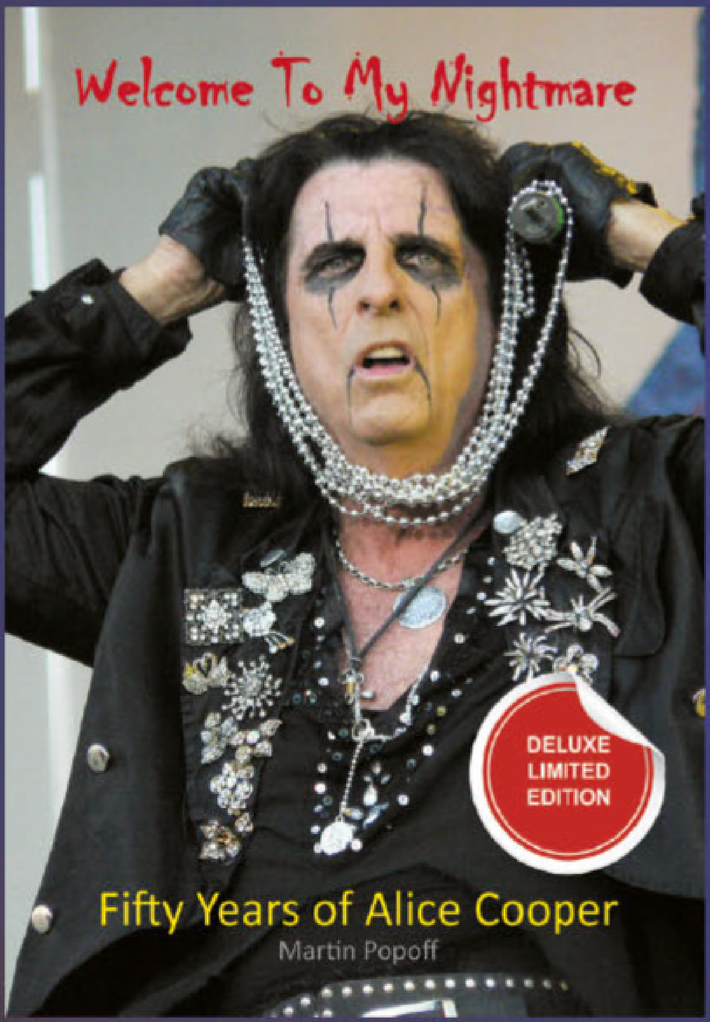

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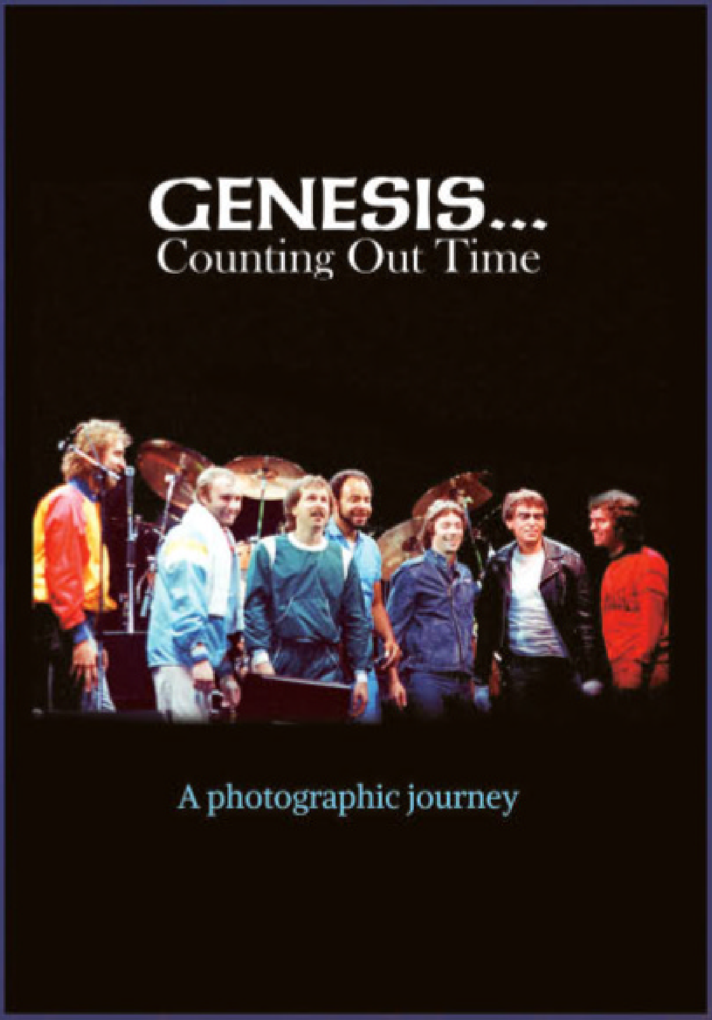

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THE 50 GREATEST AOR ALBUMS OF ALL TIME

Adult Oriented Rock is the smooth sound that came out of the USA and became the soundtrack to millions of lives all over the world – a sound defined by timeless anthems such as Boston's *More Than A Feeling*, Journey's *Don't Stop Believin'*, Survivor's *Eye Of The Tiger* and Toto's *Africa*, and by monumental power ballads, none bigger than Foreigner's global smash *I Want To Know What Love Is*. In a 15-page special, *Classic Rock* celebrates the very best of AOR from the golden age of the 70s and 80s.

Here we present The 50 Greatest AOR Albums Of All Time. Included are some of the biggest-selling records in the history of rock, and the stories of the people who made them. We speak to Boston's maverick genius Tom Scholz, Steve Perry and Jonathan Cain of Journey, Foreigner's Mick Jones, Ann Wilson of Heart, Survivor's founding member Jim Peterik, Jack Blades of Night Ranger and three members of the classic line-up of Toto: David Paich, Steve Porcaro and Steve Lukather.

We also dig deep, going beyond the hits and the household names to shine a light on the cult classics and lost heroes from this golden age. In AOR, as in life, there are winners and losers; for every fairy tale, a thousand hard-luck stories. Some of the greatest AOR albums were made by artists who never made it big, among them Diving For Pearls, New England, Balance, Giant, White Sister, Valentine and Le Roux. And two now legendary albums were made by a singer who couldn't get arrested when he was a rock artist, and failed an audition for Black Sabbath before reinventing himself as a soul star – the one and only Michael Bolton.

Equally, while AOR is a quintessentially American art form, a handful of Brits got in on the act, most notably Mick Jones, who founded Foreigner as an expat in New York City in 1977. One of the great AOR voices is Lancashire-born John Waite. And placed high in this Top 50 are albums by British acts FM, Strangeways (fronted by American singer Terry Brock) and Dare (featuring future Professor Brian Cox on keyboards!).

Likewise, while many of the leading American bands live on – including Journey, Boston and Toto – the rebirth of AOR in the new millennium has come from Europe. At its forefront are Scandinavian groups such as Eclipse and H.e.a.t., and the Italian-based record label Frontiers – named after a classic Journey album.

After the lean years of the late 90s, melodic rock rose again, and new albums of real quality are being made, showing that you can't keep a good genre down for long. In the words that Steve Perry first sang back in 1981: *'Don't stop believin', hold on to that feeling…'* ➢

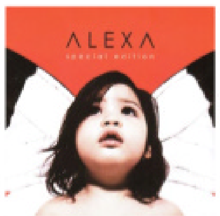
Words: **Paul Elliott, Dave Ling, Jon Hotten & Siân Llewellyn**

Cher

Steve Howe and Geoff Downes of Asia.

50 *Alexa* ALEXA

Savage, 1989



Such was the grip that Paul Sabu exerted over this unforgivably overlooked record that it was rumoured the whole thing was an elaborate ruse, and that Sabu had simply retuned his own voice and taken on a female persona. Not so. The vocalist is Alexa Anastasia, and the combination of her throaty singing and Sabu's chest-beating AOR heroics is irresistible. **JH**

Must hear: *Wanderlust*

49 *Eric Martin* ERIC MARTIN

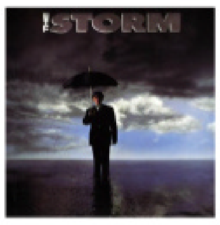
Music For Nations, 1986

Before he achieved fame as the singer with Mr. Big, baby-faced Eric Martin was a cult hero with his own band and as a solo artist. This self-titled album was his best from that period, his soulful voice lighting up quintessentially 80s tunes such as *Pictures* and a great version of Little Steven's *Lyin' In A Bed Of Fire*. **PE**

Must hear: *Pictures*

48 *The Storm* THE STORM

Interscope, 1991



Formed in the early 90s by three members of Journey – Gregg Rolie, Ross Valory and Steve Smith – during an almost decade-long hiatus from that band, The Storm were a short-term fix for the group's fans. Despite The Storm being victims of the same Interscope Records boardroom crevice that all but swallowed up Unruly Child and Crown Of Thorns, the Beau Hill-produced delights of this debut replicate the mothership in Mini-Me form. **DL**

Must hear: *I've Got A Lot To Learn About Love*

47 *Cher* CHER

Geffen, 1987

Cher's great voice, allied to the hit-making prowess of Michael Bolton, Desmond Child, Mark Mangold, Jon Bon Jovi and Richie Sambora, and a label on one of the great winning streaks in music biz history, was simply too big to fail. Reinvented as a strutting, barely clothed siren, belting out *I Found Someone* and *We All Sleep Alone*, Cher embraced this splendid reawakening as only a true star can. **JH**

Must hear: *Main Man*

46 *Drive, She Said* DRIVE, SHE SAID

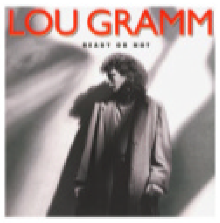
Music For Nations, 1989

It spoke volumes that CBS UK passed on this swoon-inducing debut from former American Tears, Touch, and Michael Bolton keyboard player Mark Mangold and the über-vocalist Al Fritsch, and its pomp-laden charms being shared instead via the independent label Music For Nations. The soulful approach of Fritsch (who died last October) was perfectly complemented by Mangold's instrumental vision, and the album's contents are deliciously understated. **DL**

Must hear: *Hard Way Home*

45 *Ready Or Not* LOU GRAMM

Atlantic, 1987



Frustrated by Foreigner's infighting, their singer Gramm extended the golden run of the band's 4 and *Agent Provocateur* with this dazzling first solo record, the impact of which was diluted by his almost immediate return to Journey to make *Inside Information*. Let's face it, *Ready Or Not* is almost indistinguishable from Foreigner, the elements of tasty hard rock in the title song and the hit *Midnight Blue* and a textbook ballad in *If I Don't Have You* fully being present and deliciously correct. **JH**

Must hear: *Midnight Blue*

44 *Seven The Hard Way* PAT BENATAR

Chrysalis, 1985

In 1983, American singer Pat Benatar achieved AOR perfection with the million-selling *Love Is A Battlefield*. Two years later she repeated the trick with another song from hit-maker songwriter Holly Knight, the heroic self-empowerment anthem *Invincible*. Elsewhere on *Seven The Hard Way*, Benatar's most complete AOR album, she rocks hard in *Sex Is A Weapon* and breaks hearts with *The Art Of Letting Go*. **PE**

Must hear: *Invincible*

43 *Rescue You* JOE LYNN TURNER

Elektra, 1985

After three albums as the singer in Rainbow, peaking with the classic hit single *I Surrender*, Joe Lynn Turner teamed up with Queen producer Roy Thomas Baker for his solo debut. And with Al Greenwood (ex-Foreigner) co-writing and

Pat Benatar

GETTY x3

playing keyboards the result was high-class radio rock, Turner in full, wig-lifting cry on *Young Hearts* and *Eyes Of Love*. **PE**

Must hear: *Young Hearts*

42 Night Of The Crime
ICON
Capitol, 1985

Six of this album's 10 songs were co-written by 'outsider' Bob Halligan Jr, and it was produced by Eddie Kramer and mixed by Ron Nevison. It's no surprise, then, that *Night Of The Crime* is one of the best-sounding records of the 1980s. Vocally, instrumentally and in terms of the songwriting, the album remains a masterpiece of keyboard-drenched melodic hard rock. **DL**

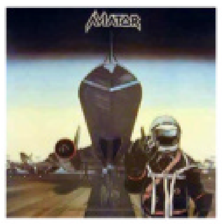
Must hear: *Shot At My Heart*

41 Asia
ASIA
Geffen, 1982

Equal parts AOR, prog, pomp and pop, Asia's self-titled debut topped the US chart for nine weeks, selling 10 million copies worldwide. The band comprised members of ELP, Yes and King Crimson, among others, and the addition of former Buggles keyboard maestro Geoff Downes brought Asia a modern edge. "We took our twelve-minute songs and removed the ten minutes of noodling," explained their bassist/singer John Wetton. **DL**

Must hear: *Heat Of The Moment*

40 Aviator
AVIATOR
RCA, 1986



One of those great 'blink and you missed them' bands, this US Coast-based quartet got just one bite at the cherry. That they ended up in the bargain bins while inferior rivals triumphed remains quite inexplicable, especially when one considers the super-slick production by the then red-hot Neil Kernon, who slotted Aviator into his schedule between *Everybody's Crazy* by Michael Bolton and Queensrÿche's *Rage For Order*. **DL**

Must hear: *Frontline*

39 Midnight Madness
NIGHT RANGER
(MCA, 1983)

From Night Ranger's second album came their biggest hit, the power ballad *Sister Christian*, written and sung by drummer Kelly Keagy. It was a Top-Five smash in the US, and later appeared in a teeth-grinding drug-deal scene in the film *Boogie Nights*. But these guys never stopped kicking ass, as proved by the heroically daft *(You Can Still) Rock In America*. **PE**

Must hear: *Sister Christian* ▷

GETTY

Jack Blades (far left) with Night Ranger in 1983.

Q&A JACK BLADES FROM NIGHT RANGER

Interview: **Paul Elliott**

When you watched the film Boogie Nights and it came to that famous scene with a semi-naked drug dealer singing and air-drumming to Sister Christian, did you laugh?

Oh, I thought it was wonderful. I went to see the movie with my wife, Molly, and when that particularly scene came around sweat broke out on our foreheads. Like, whooh, this is pretty close to real! We looked at each other and I said: "Man, I think I've been in that guy's house back in the early eighties!' Staying up all night at the drug dealer's house… Oh boy, we lived that! Our lives are different now.

The song was originally called Sister Christy. Why did you change it?

Kelly [Keagy] wrote the song about his sister, whose name is Christy, but when he sang it we all thought he was saying Sister Christian. Then one day he wrote down the lyrics, and that's when we realised. I said: "Dude, you should change it. 'Sister Christian' is much cooler." He said: "You really think so? My sister's gonna kill me!" But I told him: "You gotta do it. It's poetic licence!" And that was that.

And the song's hook line, 'You're motorin', also came from Christy.

She grew up in a small town in Oregon, and every weekend they used to go cruising at night up and down the main street. They called it 'motoring'.

How did it feel when Sister Christian hit the Top Five in America?

It was incredible. When we started touring with the *Midnight Madness* record we were playing three thousand-seat theatres. But when *Sister Christian* hit we were selling out arenas, it was ten thousand people a night. We really felt that we had arrived at that point. It was a defining moment for us.

The video for Sister Christian featured nuns in an overly literal interpretation of the song's title. Did that confuse people?

We were playing in Rochester, Minnesota, and this lady said to us: "Hey, that song *Sister Christian*, is it about a nun that sells dope to school kids?" What do you say to that? I just said: "Yes, ma'am, it is!" Hey, never destroy the dream.

The cover of Midnight Madness was also a bit weird – why was the band's keyboard player, Alan 'Fitz' Gerald, dressed as a doctor?

The set was a back lot at Universal Studios in Hollywood. We went to the wardrobe department and it was like: "You wear this, you wear that!" So Fitz put the scrubs on. In America now, all these big TV shows are *ER* and *Grey's Anatomy*, so maybe Fitz was just way ahead of the curve.

You wrote (You Can Still) Rock In America, the big anthem on the Midnight Madness album. Was that title tongue-in-cheek?

Quite the opposite! I wrote it from the heart. All these magazines were saying that rock is dead, but everywhere we played, people just wanted to rock. I didn't know what these magazines were talking about, so I said it out loud: you can still rock in America!

You were right. But it was a ballad that became Night Ranger's biggest and most remembered song.

Well, in that era everybody came out with a power ballad. And luckily for us we had *Sister Christian*. It was never a Number-One record, but it's a song that defines that whole era.

38 *Don't Come Easy*
TYKETTO
Geffen, 1990

Tyketto were a band out of time, signing with the major label that had broken Whitesnake and Guns N' Roses just as another Geffen act, Nirvana, were washing the last of hair-metal down the plughole. *Don't Come Easy* should be taken as a pair with the powerful follow-up *Strength In Numbers* as a 'what might have been' for the wonderfully talented frontman Danny Vaughn. *Burning Down Inside* and *Forever Young* remain a genre staples, too. **JH**

Must hear: *Burning Down Inside*

37 *Valentine*
VALENTINE
WMG, 1990

Led by Hugo, a man who took the Steve Perry impersonation beyond mere vocal stylings and into the vaguely creepy approximations of the doppelganger, Valentine achieved a strange kind of AOR immortality with one song from this debut, the ballad *Never Said It Was Gonna Be Easy*. Into its seven minutes they packed every cliché, re-spun into a song of emotionally devastating heartbreak from which Hugo may never recover. **JH**

Must hear: *Never Said It Was Gonna Be Easy*

36 *Bad English*
BAD ENGLISH
Epic, 1989

In the late 1980s, excitement greeted news of a liaison between two key songwriters from Journey (Neal Schon and Jonathan Cain) and a pair of former members on The Babys (frontman-turned-solo hitmaker John Waite and future Styx member Ricky Phillips). And just for once, peerless performance would outstrip the promise of the personnel. No less than five singles were pulled from this debut as it rattled towards a million US sales. **DL**

Must hear: *When I See You Smile*

35 *Heart*
HEART
Capitol, 1985

This is the 40 minutes that reinvented 70s folk rockers Heart as a slick MTV AOR band. For *Heart* the band jettisoned the acoustic guitars and mandolins in favour of dreamy keyboards, a massive production by Ron Nevison and an occasional searing guitar solo, but all the gloss and bolt-on songwriters couldn't change the dynamic power of Ann Wilson's voice. *Heart* shifted more than five million copies and yielded four Top 10 hits in the US alone (including their first No.1 with *These Dreams*, featuring sister Nancy on lead vocals). **SL**

Must hear: *These Dreams*

Jefferson Starship

34 *So Fired Up*
LEROUX
RCA, 1983

Still active in their home base of Louisiana, LeRoux were joined by future Toto singer Dennis Frederiksen for this, their fifth album. Equally at home with the ballads *Wait One Minute* and *Let Me In* or more up-tempo moments such as *Carrie's Gone*, *Turning Point* and *Lifeline* (later recorded by Uriah Heep), the performance from Frederiksen (who passed away in 2014) is superlative. **DL**

Must hear: *Turning Point*

33 *In For The Count*
BALANCE
Portrait, 1982

Prior to reuniting for the all-new *Equilibrium* in 2009, these New Yorkers crafted two excellent releases in the 80s, *In For The Count* being their second. Led by singer Peppy Castro, guitarist Bob Kulick and keyboard player Doug Katsaros, their sound was crisp, nimble and very stylish. It's now possible to pick up the first pair of albums as a single CD, and they're highly recommended. **DL**

Must hear: *In For The Count*

32 *Unruly Child*
UNRULY CHILD
Interscope, 1992

Unruly Child teamed the ex-World Trade duo of keyboard player Guy Allison and guitarist Bruce Gowdy with a genuinely world class singer in ex-Signal/King Kobra man Mark Free. The results were an immaculate, chest-beating mix of AOR, hard rock and melodic metal, although a combination of grunge, record label bungling and Free's gender confusion stopped the band in its tracks. **DL**

Must hear: *Who Cries Now*

31 *Freedom At Point Zero*
JEFFERSON STARSHIP
Grunt/RCA, 1979

You will almost certainly know this album's single, *Jane*, an all-time classic riffer. *Freedom At Point Zero*, its parent album, saw the introduction of an uncut diamond named Mickey Thomas on vocals, with Grace Slick and Marty Balin having headed out of the door. Slick would return two years, later but in the meantime guitarist Craig Chaquico tilted the rudder firmly towards arena-friendly acceptance with the track *Rock Music*. **DL**

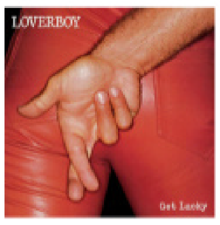
Must hear: *Jane*

30 *When Seconds Count*
SURVIVOR
Scotti Brothers, 1986

This great album could have been even greater had *Burning Heart*, Survivor's second *Rocky* theme hit, not been tied exclusively to the film's soundtrack. Even so, *When Seconds Count* is a monumental achievement – *Is This Love* is a perfect pop rock song, *Rebel Son* the most epic track of the band's career. 1988 follow-up *Too Hot To Sleep* is also a doozy. **PE**

Must hear: *Rebel Son*

29 *Get Lucky*
LOVERBOY
Columbia, 1981



The sleeve showing a set of crossed fingers behind a backside wearing sprayed-on red leather strides summed up the boisterous optimism of *Get Lucky*, the second album from fun-loving Canadians Loverboy. Doug Johnson's urgent keyboards add depth and colour to the sprightly hooks. No wonder it sold four million copies in the US alone, remaining on the US chart for more than two years. **PE**

Must hear: *Working For The Weekend*

GETTY

Heart

"IT WAS SORT OF A DEVIL'S BARGAIN"

Singer Ann Wilson on the **Heart** album that reinvented the band.

Interview: **Siân Llewellyn**

"In 1984 we had just sort of washed up on the beach after a big personnel change in the band and a management change. We changed everything. Nancy and I just instinctively felt that we had come to the end of an era. So we had gotten a new bass player and drummer [Mark Andes and Denny Carmassi] and Howard Leese stayed on. We were in a real state of change, so the mood in the band was that our expectations were not real high. We were just trying to re-form; things were kinda chaotic. We had the enthusiasm of Don Grierson, the guy who signed us at Capitol, but we knew that we had to make a hit record or quite possibly we'd find ourselves without a record deal.

"He had a vision for the band that we hadn't even thought of yet because we were just out there, slogging playing concerts in the country. We weren't back in the cultural centres, where at that time they were formulating all this new video world and songwriting world, we were out in the middle of America. Don and Capitol were imagining something for us that we couldn't even guess at yet.

"It took Nancy and I a couple of bangs over the head with a sledgehammer to really understand that [using outside songwriters] was a good thing for us, because we had previously written everything. The type of stuff we were writing was not the type of stuff that was being accepted by radio. So we kept giving our songs to the pile that were under consideration for the *Heart* record. Maybe, sixty per cent of them were songs that Nance and I wrote, but the forty per cent were the ones that were getting used. That sounds funny, cos you'd think Nance and I would be in the driver's seat on that, but at that time we were not.

"It was hard, because we really liked the success that it brought – a lot. But we really felt uncomfortable about the fact that we'd worked all those years and written all those songs and it took other people's songs to get us Number Ones. So it was sort of a devil's bargain. But I'm not going to lie to you and say that someone else tied our hands and made us do it. We did it of our own free will. It's just that later on when it became expected of us, that's when we really went, okay, this is enough.

"Back then in the extremely egocentric and ambitious eighties there was that hysterical, desperate, 'we're just gonna do whatever it takes' attitude. And that's what the record company had. We were encouraged to have it too, and we did have it. We did a lot of stuff going after this goal, and I think in the process we forged a pretty amazing group. It just took me a while to get used to the idea of singing other people's songs, of being an interpreter of other people's songs.

"At first it was definitely not calculated. It was dress-up, it was kabuki, it was theatre. Both Nancy and I have always loved make-up and styling and clothes. And what person wouldn't wanna look at a rack of outrageous clothes and pick from them and turn yourself into this amazing rock creature?"

"It was just amazing fun. And then we tried to take them out on the road to recreate that live. And with all the real conditions of playing in the deep south in the extreme heat and humidity, with a corset and big heavy hair and velvet and that kinda stuff, it became really hard."

"The album sounds like a product of its era, but if you listen deeper into the songwriting some of those songs are great. And they translate and they come down the years. That album, I gotta say, glossy as hell, sounds very corporate. And the eighties *was* corporate, the eighties was driven by cocaine and arrogance, and it fit that bill. And we succeeded in standing on top of the icy mountain."

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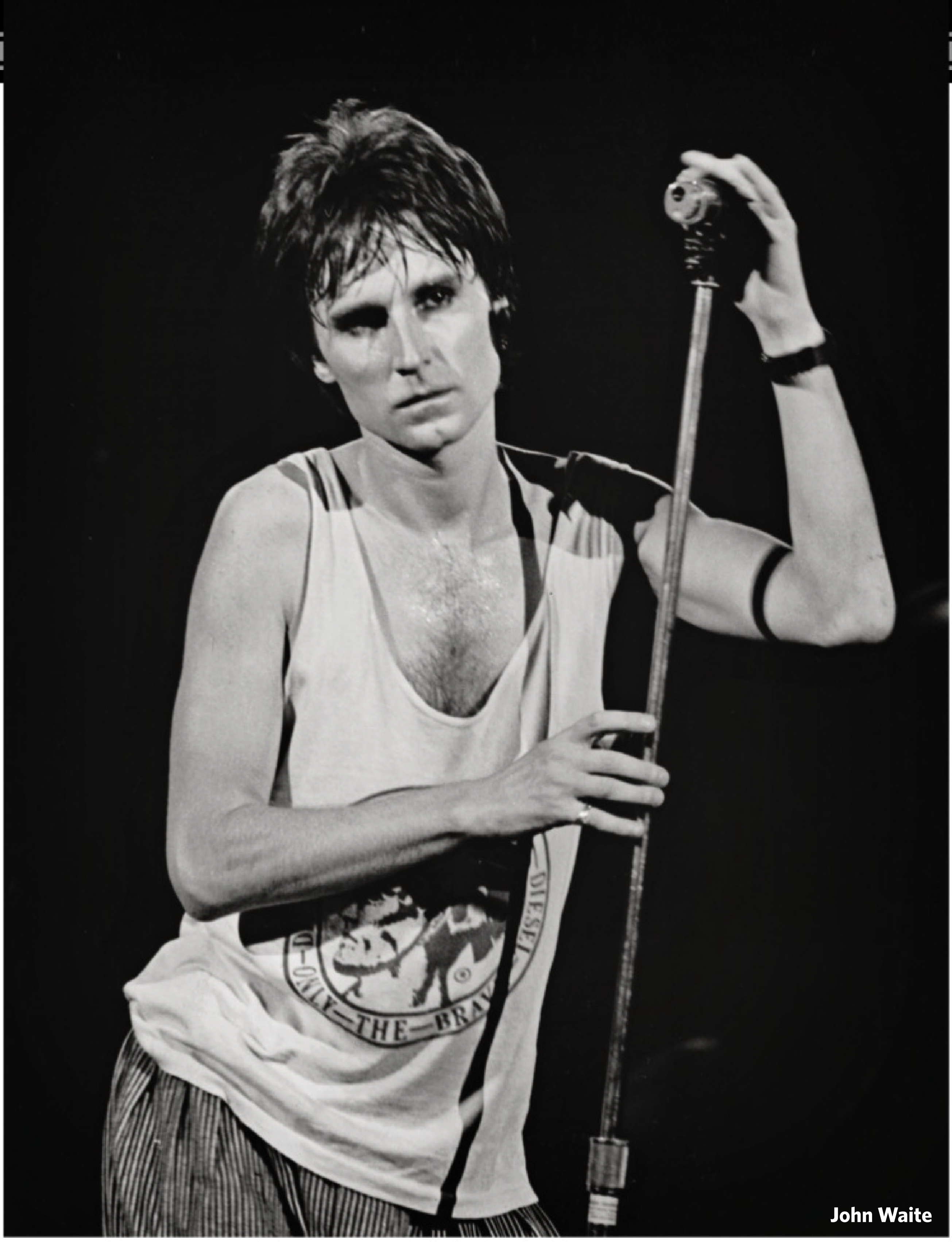
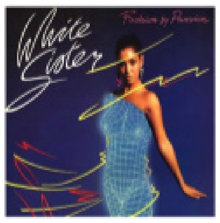


John Waite

28

Fashion By Passion
WHITE SISTER

FM Revolver, 1986



From LA, and named after a Toto song, White Sister made a fine debut album in 1984, full of heavy pomp rock and produced by former Angel star Gregg Giuffria. *Fashion By Passion*, the group's second and final album, was even better – less pompous, more melodic and capped by a glorious version of The Beatles' *Ticket To Ride*. **PE**

Must hear: *Ticket To Ride*

27

Last Of The Runaways
GIANT

A&M, 1989

The history of AOR is littered with unheralded greatness, and Giant, who recorded this stellar debut, lie among the fallen. At the forefront of the band was Dann Huff, who matched his virtuosity on guitar with a voice made for radio. There is a touch of sad grandeur about *Last Of The Runaways* that few can match, from the big hit *I'll See You In My Dreams* to the diamond chorus of *Hold Back The Night*. **JH**

Must hear: *Innocent Days*

26

No Brakes
JOHN WAITE

EMI, 1984

The quality of John Waite's voice and his acute ear for a good song built one of the great, unheralded British rock careers. From The Babys, where he worked with Jonathan Cain, through this solo incarnation that yielded the enduring *Missing You*, and on to Bad English, where he reunited with Cain alongside Neal Schon, he has made hits. *No Brakes* sums up his uncomplicated, hook-heavy approach. **JH**

Must hear: *Missing You*

25

Paradise Theater
STYX

A&M, 1981

Some consider *Paradise Theater* the last truly great heyday-era Styx album. It saw the band commandeer the abandonment of a run-down local cinema as metaphor for American society as a whole. That might sound unexciting in principle, but songs such as *Too Much Time On My Hands* and *The Best Of Times* were quite extraordinary. **DL**

Must hear: *AD 1928/Rockin' The Paradise*

24

Agent Provocateur
FOREIGNER

(Atlantic, 1984)

It started with a bang – *Tooth And Nail*, one of Foreigner's heaviest songs. But the true measure of this album is in two of the greatest power ballads of all time: *I Want To Know What Love Is*, elevated by a gospel choir, a UK and US No.1; and *That Was Yesterday*, a perfectly crafted song of profound sadness. **PE**

Must hear: *That Was Yesterday*

23

Native Sons
STRANGEWAYS

Bonaire/RCA, 1987

The addition of Terry Brock, an American singer blessed with a golden voice, should have made this Glasgow-based band into superstars. Alas record label issues intervened, but *Native Sons* remains all all-time cult classic. In his *Kerrang!* review at the time, Derek Oliver called *Native Sons* "the greatest and most preciously perfect melodic AOR album of all time", and today it still sounds incredible. **DL**

Must hear: *Goodnight LA*

22

Third Stage
BOSTON

MCA, 1986

In search of perfection, Boston's maverick leader Tom Scholz fussed over this album for so long that he was sued for breach of contract by record company CBS before signing to rival MCA. As a result, Third Stage was his greatest victory, a brilliant concept album (boy-to-man stuff), with the beautiful ballad *Amanda* hitting No.1 in America. **PE**

Must hear: *Amanda*

21

Out Of The Silence
DARE

A&M, 1988

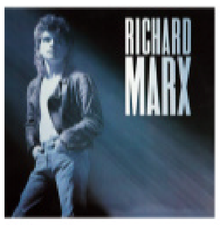
Dare's first and best album is so supremely AOR that it features two keyboard players – Darren Wharton, the group's leader and singer, formerly of Thin Lizzy, and Brian Cox, who later became famous as a scientist and TV presenter. There is epic drama in *Abandon* and *The Raindance*, and in *King Of Spades* a beautiful elegy for Wharton's late mentor Phil Lynott. **PE**

Must hear: *Abandon*

20

Richard Marx
RICHARD MARX

EMI, 1987



In the summer of 1987, who could resist Richard Marx? Chiseled, mulletted and in possession of a collection of instant AOR classics, Marx was everyone's favourite boy-crush,

GETTY

BAM! BAM-BAM-BAM!

The tale of **Survivor**, Rocky Balboa and the song that shook the world and became a global hit.

Words: **Paul Elliott**

He played the message on his answering machine several times before he believed what he was hearing. "Hey, Jim!" said a voice in a New York Italian-American accent. "Gimme a call! It's Sylvester Stallone."

It was late 1981, and for Jim Peterik, keyboard player, songwriter and founding member of Chicago rock band Survivor, life would never be the same again.

Immediately, Peterik phoned Frankie Sullivan, the guitarist with whom he had formed Survivor in 1977, and told him that one of the biggest movie stars in the world wanted to talk. "Frankie didn't believe it either," Peterik recalled with a laugh. "But he came straight to my house, and we made that call together."

First, Stallone told them of a mutual connection. His brother Frank, a singer, was signed to the same label as Survivor, Scotti Brothers Records. Second, he said that he loved Survivor's song *Poor Man's Son*, the band's first top-40 hit. Third, he gave them a shot at immortality – he said he needed a theme song for his new movie, *Rocky III* – the third instalment of the blockbuster franchise in which he starred as boxer Rocky Balboa. And he wanted Survivor to give him an anthem just like *Poor Man's Son*.

"I want something for the kids," Stallone said. "Something fresh and modern, something with a pulse! Can you do it?"

"Are you kidding?" Peterik replied. "Damn right we can!"

The following day, Peterik and Sullivan received a video tape containing three minutes of action sequences from *Rocky III* in which Stallone and co-star Mr T duked it out in the ring to the sound of Queen's *Another One Bites The Dust*. "It was just amazing," Peterik says. "The energy!"

He and Sullivan had to replace the Queen track with something that would match that energy. The answer, a thudding staccato riff, came to Peterik while he was driving. "I saw the punches in my mind: Bam! Bam-bam-bam! Bam-bam-bam! Bam-bam BAM!"

The title for their song was lifted from a phrase in the movie spoken by Rocky's trainer, Micky Goldmill, played by Burgess Meredith: "Rocky, you gotta keep the eye of the tiger!" This resonated powerfully with Peterik. He told Sullivan: "Man, that is the greatest title in the world!" Stallone informed them that the phrase derived from ancient Chinese. "'The eye of the tiger' is the killer instinct," Peterik said. "It's the will to survive, to exceed your roots, to go beyond what anyone thought you could do." The lyrics he wrote were wonderfully evocative, and, shrewdly, included the name of the band.

When Stallone received the finished track, his response was emphatic: "You guys really did it. It's a smash!"

But it was a bigger smash than he or the band could ever have imagined. In 1982, *Eye Of The Tiger* hit No.1 in the US, the UK, Japan and six other countries. And three years later, Peterik got another call from Stallone. "We got *Rocky IV*," he said. "You wanna do it again?"

By that time, Survivor had a new singer in place of Dave Bickler, who sang on *Eye Of The Tiger*. The most famous dude to wear a beret who wasn't either French or Che Guevara had been replaced by Jimi Jamison.

The song that Peterik and Sullivan wrote for *Rocky IV* was essentially *Eye Of The Tiger Part II*. "We wanted that same kind of pulse," Peterik said. "We had a formula and we weren't gonna change it." For this song, *Burning Heart*, Peterik's lyrics were inspired by the movie's Cold War-era plotline, in which Rocky fought Russian boxer Ivan Drago (Dolph Lundgren). Peterik wrote: *'Is it East versus West, or man against man?'* Jamison sang that line, and indeed the whole song, as if the whole word hung in the balance. Another rock classic was born. And in February 1986, *Burning Heart* reached No.2 in the US.

ALAMY x2

cheeky one moment, heart-broken the next. From *Should've Known Better* to those *Endless Summer Nights*, we remember every moment. He also had a former cast member of *The Waltons* on guitar. **JH**

Must hear: *Should've Known Better*

19 *Diving For Pearls* DIVING FOR PEARLS

Epic, 1989

At the end of the 80s, this New York band sounded like the future of AOR, their flawless debut album delivering ultra-melodic songs with a modern dynamic, as illustrated by the anthem *Gimme Your Good Lovin'*. They also had a unique voice in Danny Malone. Even though the album sold 250,000, Epic Records dropped the band. It remains a lost classic. **PE**

Must hear: *Gimme Your Good Lovin'.*

18 *Eye Of The Tiger* SURVIVOR

Scotti Brothers, 1982

The song that made Survivor famous was written for the smash-hit boxing movie *Rocky III* at the request of its star, Sylvester Stallone. *Eye Of The Tiger* punched its way to No.1 all over the world, and the parent album, which included another era-defining anthem in *American Heartbeat*, was the band's best with original vocalist Dave Bickler. **PE**

Must hear: *Eye Of The Tiger*

LONDON CALLING

In the late 80s, **FM** were seen by some as the great British AOR hope. But stylists aren't the only reason it didn't happen.

Words: **Dave Ling**

In September 1986, London-based quintet FM released their debut album, *Indiscreet*. It offered a firm nod to bands such as Survivor, Styx, Foreigner, Boston and Journey. The titles on *Indiscreet* say it all: *American Girls, That Girl, Love Lies Dying* and, best of all, the über-ballad *Frozen Heart*.

"Back then, those bands still represented mainstream music," vocalist Steve Overland recalls. "Bon Jovi, Europe and Bryan Adams were having hit records. It was the best of times."

"We also drew from the likes of Steely Dan, the Eagles, the Doobie Brothers and, even further back, Free and Bad Company," adds bassist Merv Goldsworthy. "But being English we never had that American sense of cool. The swagger was missing."

For five provincially born guys, writing about America was an aspirational thing. "As a song title, *King's Lynn Girls* just doesn't have the same effect," Goldsworthy says with a laugh. None of the band had even visited the States, and although they briefly considering relocating there, just like most of their UK AOR counterparts FM's record company, Epic/CBS, never sent them there to play.

"Our stylists took us to LA and bought me a sleeveless denim jacket and a pair of Levi's available in any high street," Overland marvels.

Current keyboard player Jem Davis has a similarly ridiculous tale from his days with the band Tobruk. "EMI paid a stylist to come in and rip a pair of jeans," he says, laughing. "We could have done it ourselves with a Stanley knife."

Enhanced or otherwise, FM readily admit to being "naff" during the 1980s. That description comes from Goldsworthy, whose flamboyant, grapefruit-pink suit of the era has become a garment of legend. To the relief of all concerned, it now resides in a Hard Rock Café somewhere in Japan.

One thing that CBS *did* do for FM's second album, 1989's *Tough It Out*, was team the band with leading songwriter of the day Desmond Child, for what became lead-off single *Bad Luck*. Its trademark chugging riff sounded like every Bon Jovi song that Child had written. "That was the whole point," Overland says. "It's what the record company wanted."

Despite FM selling out Hammersmith Odeon, *Tough It Out* didn't provide the breakthrough craved by the band and their label, and a changed line-up signed to indie label Music For Nations for the bluesier *Takin' It To The Streets*. Two albums later, the band simply ran out of steam with 1995's aptly titled *Dead Man's Shoes*. None of FM remember the point at which they realised they were not destined to be megastars.

"That thought never occurred to us – and it's probably part of why it never happened," Overland admits. "Of course, the money would have been nice, but what we really enjoyed was being in a band together. That's the truth.

"By *Dead Man's Shoes* we could've continued but there was no reason to," he adds. "We weren't getting on the radio and, post-grunge, the magazines no longer covered us. We'd become irrelevant."

When FM were invited to reunite for the now sadly defunct indoor melodic event the Firefest in 2007, Overland harboured a single worry: "Would the songs sound dated ten years later?" he frowns. "But in rehearsal we realised that they were still really, really good. AOR at its best is all about timeless, well-constructed tunes. A Journey, Toto or Foreigner song could be performed by a boy band. FM have a few of those too. Good country music is the same – it's all about the song."

This belief fuels the unlikely current second spell that has seen FM surpass their achievements of first time around. They are now played on Radio 2 and have appeared at the Download festival. Doors previously locked to them are opening. Besides the consistency and variety of their songwriting, from *Metropolis* in 2010 onwards FM have employed a secret weapon: Jeff Knowler, the mixing engineer who has added a layer of contemporary-sounding fairy dust to their most recent records. "Shhhh, or everyone will want to use him," Goldsworthy warns playfully. "Print his name wrong please."

With musicians of almost pensionable age still playing hits that are now decades old, the long-term future of melodic rock could be seen as doubtful. There's hardly a queue of youngsters lining up to succeed them, after all. But FM take issue with such talk.

"AOR will never die," Goldsworthy insists. "Bands like Vega, Eclipse and H.e.a.t exist – the question is whether they're tough enough to survive and thrive."

RAY PALMER ARCHIVE/ICONICPIX

17 *Michael Bolton*
MICHAEL BOLTON
Columbia, 1983

Everybody's Crazy is Michael Bolton's masterpiece, but the album he made before it is a classic in its own right, loaded with great songs such as *Fool's Game, Hometown Hero* and *Can't Hold On, Can't Let Go*, all sung as only Bolton can. A masterful version of The Supremes hit *Back In My Arms Again* was a signpost to his future. **PE**

Must hear: *Fool's Game*

16 *FM*
INDISCREET
Portrait, 1986

Thirty-two years after its release, *Indiscreet* is still the greatest UK AOR album ever made, filled with perfectly crafted songs including *That Girl, Frozen Heart* and *I Belong To The Night*, and Steve Overland's heroic performance on the record reminds us why he's nicknamed The Voice. FM's follow-up, *Tough It Out*, featuring the Desmond Child-assisted *Bad Luck*, is another masterpiece of the genre. **PE**

Must hear: *That Girl*

15 *Street Talk*
STEVE PERRY
Columbia, 1984

On this, his first solo album, released when he was still Journey's singer, Perry mixed soft rock and soul to brilliant effect, scoring a huge US hit with *Oh Sherrie*, a shout-out to his then girlfriend. His second solo record, 1994's *For The Love Of Strange Medicine*, is as overwrought as its title suggests, but on *Street Talk* simplicity is genius. **PE**

Must hear: *Oh Sherrie*

Mr. Mister

14 *New England*
NEW ENGLAND
Infinity, 1978

Unsurprisingly, they were from New England (Boston, actually, but someone had already nicked that as a band name), and this debut album, co-produced by Paul Stanley of Kiss, is a masterclass in what frontman John Fannon called "power-melodic song-oriented rock". *Hello, Hello, Hello* has shades of Jeff Lynne, and *Don't Ever Wanna Lose Ya*, a glorious pomp-rock anthem, was a minor US hit that should have made them bigger than Jesus. **PE**

Must hear: *Don't Ever Wanna Lose Ya*

13 *Toto*
TOTO
Columbia, 1978

Toto is the sound of a genre beginning to crystalise, *Hold The Line* an early example of what American radio rock would become. It was trampled by the press when it was released, but the divide between the critics and the public was already apparent as musicians and radio programmers tried to find an audience not served elsewhere. A milestone. **JH**

Must hear: *Hold The Line*

12 *Foreigner*
FOREIGNER
Atlantic, 1977

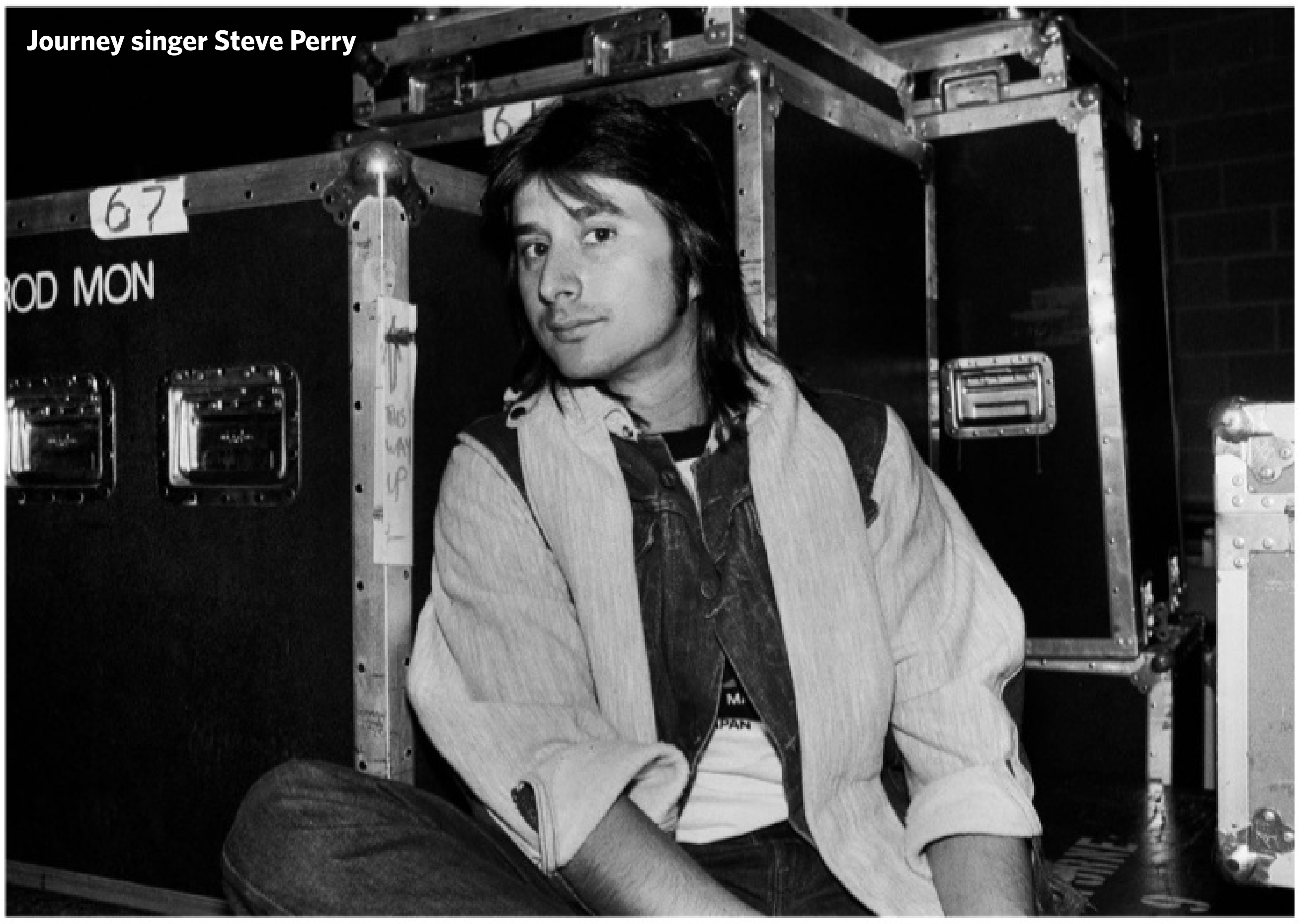
1977 wasn't all about punk rock. It was also a defining year for the less fashionable exponents of AOR, with Foreigner's debut a multimillion-seller. *Feels Like The First Time* and *Cold As Ice* were US Top 10 hits, and for the next 10 years the hits kept coming. **PE**

Must hear: *Cold As Ice*

11 *Welcome To The Real World*
MR. MISTER
RCA, 1985

Singer Richard Page almost joined Toto, but instead found fame, albeit fleetingly, with Mr. Mister. This, their second album, a perfect hybrid of melodic rock and new wave, yielded two US No.1s in *Broken Wings*, a ballad as immaculate as The Cars' *Drive*, and *Kyrie*, a ringing, quasi-spiritual anthem. **PE**

Must hear: *Kyrie* ▷



Journey singer Steve Perry

GETTY x2

"WE ORDERED A BUNCH OF DOM PERIGNON!"

REO Speedwagon frontman Kevin Cronin on *Hi Infidelity.*

Interview: **Paul Elliott**

"I don't know anyone could have foreseen what was going to happen with that record. I guess the stars were lined up.

"The first time I played *Keep On Loving You* on the piano, the guys looked at me like I was from a different planet. 'What are you, Barry Manilow?' That's what the song sounded like at first. But it was a really important song for me, very personal, and I wasn't about to let go of it.

"I kept playing it over and over, until one day Gary [Richrath, guitarist] plugged in his Les Paul and hit these big chords. Honestly, I think he was just trying to drown me out. But I said: 'Dude, that's perfect!' The song had been a little too sweet. It needed that nasty guitar tone. And that's when the light bulb went on: 'Ah, that's how we do this! Kevin writes a little folk song, Gary trashes it out, and then you got something.' That's where it all coalesced for us.

"*Take It On The Run* was written by Gary, and it has one of the greatest opening lines in rock history: '*Heard it from a friend who heard it from a friend who heard it from another you been messin' around…*' I wish I'd written that! *Take It On The Run* and *Keep On Loving You* were pretty much the same story but from different perspectives.

"*Keep On Loving You* was also the first song where I really exposed my life and my relationship to a certain degree – maybe too much. The chorus is very pretty, but in the verses there's some nasty stuff in there, man! It was kind of a taboo subject. There are people that use *Keep On Loving You* as their wedding song. I often think: 'Hey, did you listen to the verses?' But what I learned with that song was that the more you expose of your life, the more people will relate to it. That's what really hit the ball out of the park.

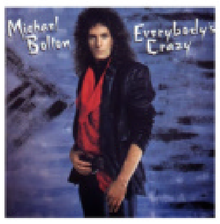
"When *Hi Infidelity* hit Number One [in February 1981] we were in the midst of a four-night stand at the International Amphitheater in Chicago. To see our album at Number One was mind-boggling. We ordered a bunch of Dom Perignon and just yelled like schoolboys! It was awesome! The days of touring in a Chevrolet station wagon were still fresh in our minds. We had the Number-One record when MTV started out, so that just fuelled the phenomenon even more. We weren't prepared for the level of success and how quickly our lives changed. But to have the Number One record in America, it was everything that I'd ever hoped for."

10 *Hi Infidelity*
REO SPEEDWAGON
Epic, 1980

What made REO Speedwagon's ninth album their first US No.1 were two hits delivering an iron fist in a velvet glove. For all the melodic uplift in the ballad *Keep On Loving You* (also US No.1) and the rockier *Take It On The Run*, the lyrics spoke of love as war. Classic songs, quintessential AOR. **PE**

Must hear: *Keep On Loving You*

9 *Everybody's Crazy*
MICHAEL BOLTON
(Columbia, 1985)



Before the transformation into superstar soul singer and Mullet King, Michael Bolton rocked. With a voice so powerful that he once auditioned for Black Sabbath, he delivered in *Everybody's Crazy* a melodic rock *tour de force*, with the anthem *Save Our Love* and the power ballad *Call My Name* its devastating emotional peaks. **PE**

Must hear: *Save Our Love*

8 *Raised On Radio*
JOURNEY
Columbia, 1986

The last record Journey made with Steve Perry during his initial and most important time in the band, *Raised On Radio* is an artistic high point that for many surpasses even *Escape* and *Frontiers* in terms of songwriting and performance. Perry's grip on *Raised On Radio* is evident: it is a masterclass that cemented him as a vocalist without equal. **JH**

Must hear: *Girl Can't Help It*

7 *Dawn Patrol*
NIGHT RANGER
Boardwalk, 1982

With twin-guitar firepower, two great singers and killer songs, Night Ranger's *Dawn Patrol* was the best American rock debut since Van Halen's. A signature sound was defined by the blazing energy of *Don't Tell Me You Love Me* and the melodic finesse of *Sing Me Away*. The record's unsung hero was geeky keyboard ninja Alan 'Fitz' Gerald. **PE**

Must hear: *Don't Tell Me You Love Me*

6 *Toto IV*
TOTO
(Columbia, 1982)

1982 was the year that Toto ruled the world. Crack session musicians and hit songwriters, they were heavily involved in what became the biggest-selling album of all time, Michael Jackson's *Thriller*. Their own album *Toto IV* was huge too, selling millions via its smash hit singles *Rosanna*, *I Won't Hold You Back* and Africa. A soft-rock behemoth – critics be damned! **PE**

Must hear: *Africa*

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OUT OF AFRICA

Q&A

Toto's David Paich, Steve Lukather and Steve Porcaro tell all about the making of *Toto IV*, and its hit that never goes away and still defines the band: *Africa*.

Interview: **Paul Elliott**

The self-titled first Toto album was a huge hit. The next two, Hydra and Turn Back, bombed. Were you under serious pressure after that?

David Paich: *Toto IV* was kind of our last chance. The record company said: "We want to see if you guys still know how to make hit records."

Steve Porcaro: I remember the feeling that *Toto IV* was a do-or-die thing. We had to really deliver.

Did that pressure feed into the making of the album?

Steve Lukather: There were times when we got into some very heated arguments about songs, lyrics… everything!

DP: It was a democratic band, but Jeff Porcaro [drummer] was the lead spokesman for Toto, and it was pretty much he and I making the decisions.

Did you bump heads?

SP: Absolutely. I got to tell you, in the studio with Toto it's a tough room.

When did you first get the feeling that this album might really have potential?

DP: We went to England to use the London Symphony Orchestra on *I Won't Hold You Back*, so we were really going for it. And after we finished *Rosanna* we knew we had something.

SL: *Rosanna* had the groove. It was deep in the pocket. It had that blue-eyed soul thing, but with crunchy guitars. You have all these guys putting different things into the blender, and that's what Toto is.

DP: We had the whole record done, and I said: "Are we missing something?" I had just gotten some new keyboards, they had some interesting sounds. And that's when I wrote *Africa*.

Bingo!

DP: That song was almost not on the record. But I said to Jeff: "This is so special, I want you to compose a drum loop and make that part of the composition." I spent four or five months on the lyrics, trying to get them to feel just right, but when I got to the chorus the words just came out. I stopped and thought: "This is unbelievable. I'm talented, but I'm not *that* talented. Someone's using me as a medium here to write this song."

Do you understand why people find the lyrics in Africa so funny?

DP: Ha ha. Well, what other songs have the words 'Serengeti' and 'Kilimanjaro' in them? There are a lot of words in that song, and everybody took a crack at it, but I ended up singing it because I was the only person who could get the words out. There was a joke in the band: next time you write a hit record, make sure the lead singer is singing it.

Bobby Kimball was the lead singer in Toto back then, but he didn't sing lead on this album's hit songs.

SL: Dave wanted everybody to sing in Toto. The Beatles had four singers – even Ringo sang.

It's fair to say that Toto IV was never a favourite with the critics.

SP: Toto has always been seen as a calculated, corporate rock band – exactly the kind of thing that critics hate.

SL: We were the whipping boys. The critics called us 'soulless', said weren't 'real', blah blah blah. That c**t Robert Hilburn from the *LA Times* really had it in for us. He put us up against The Clash. And I love The Clash, but it's two different kinds of music.

Later, when the album was a hit, you turned down the cover of Rolling Stone.

SL: That was a punk-rock move if I ever heard one. We knew it would be a hatchet job, so why put your cock in front of a chainsaw and go: "Okay, pull"?

Then you won so many Grammys.

SL: The only guy that got really pissy about it was John Mellencamp [whose *American Fool* was also nominated for Album Of The Year, won by *Toto IV*], and he's a douchebag anyway. But there was a lot of love in the room for us. Stevie Wonder gave us an award. Elton John gave us a standing ovation.

And thirty-six years down the line, Africa is still the song that defines Toto.

SL: *Africa* has a life of its own. It's like fucking herpes – it goes away and it comes back.

5 *Frontiers*
JOURNEY
Columbia, 1983)

If ever there was a hard act to follow, it was *Escape*, the all-conquering masterpiece that had made Journey the biggest rock act in America. But when the heat was on, these guys didn't falter. What they delivered with *Frontiers* was another multi-platinum hit, another classic.

Separate Ways (Worlds Apart), the album's opening track, is the ultimate heavy melodic rock anthem, its dramatic tone set in Jonathan Cain's neon-bright keyboard intro, the band blasting at full power, and Steve Perry hitting high notes and a deep emotional intensity that made him the greatest singer of his generation. *Faithfully* is the definitive power ballad, with Perry's voice again at its absolute peak. *Edge Of The Blade* is arguably Journey's heaviest song. The title track, tricksy and unconventional, has a flavour of early-80s Rush. And *After The Fall* and *Send Her My Love* are two more supreme ballads from the undisputed masters of the art.

Most extraordinary of all is that this brilliant album could have been even better. In a bizarre decision, two glorious songs, *Only The Young* and *Ask The Lonely*, did not make the cut. And while one substitution in their place was the wonderfully atmospheric *Troubled Child*, the other, *Back Talk*, was a complete turkey, perhaps the worst song the band ever recorded, and the one flaw in what was otherwise a work of genius. **PE**

Must hear: *Separate Ways (Worlds Apart)*

4 *Vital Signs*
SURVIVOR
Scotti Brothers, 1984

In 1983, just a year after Survivor hit big with *Eye Of The Tiger*, the band were in deep shit. Singer Dave Bickler, suffering from damaged vocal cords, got through the next album, *Caught In The Game*, but his exit from Survivor followed quickly. For Bickler it was heartbreaking, for the band a potential career killer. As keyboard player Jim Peterik said: "Very few bands survive a lead singer transplant."

But what they found in Jimi Jamison was a guy with a one-in-a-million voice. And what Survivor created in *Vital Signs*, their first album with Jamison, was a comeback hit and the pinnacle of the band's career.

"Jimi had the most magical voice I've ever heard," Peterik said. Equally, Jamison was gifted some of the greatest songs ever written by Peterik and guitarist Frankie Sullivan: glorious anthems *I Can't Hold Back* and *It's The Singer Not The Song*, and the masterful ballad *The Search Is Over*. Of the latter, Peterik recalled: "To hear Jimi sing the shit out of it, I knew it was a hit."

Vital Signs was the album on which Survivor reached their creative peak, and Jamison delivered the greatest performance of his life. As Peterik said after the singer's death in 2014: "Jimi was one of the greats." **PE**

Must hear: *I Can't Hold Back*

"IT WAS PROBABLY OUR BEST ALBUM"

Foreigner guitarist Mick Jones on their classic *4*.

Interview: **Paul Elliott**

"I'm still incredibly proud of 4. It was probably our best album; certainly it was the one that we had been working towards. It captured the vision I had in mind for the band – that we would be taken seriously.

"With the first three albums we were still desperately feeling our way. Dennis [Elliott, drums] and Rick [Wills, bass] were a very solid rhythm section, and we were going to have to sort out the rest of the line-up. Al [Greenwood, keyboards] and Ian [McDonald, multi-instrumentalist] both felt they weren't able to contribute enough, and that was starting to fester. Letting them both go was probably the toughest decision I've ever had to make.

"'Mutt' Lange's input was fundamental to its success. Having been closely involved in the production of our first three albums, I felt I needed to be relieved of some of that pressure. I needed somebody strong enough to stand up to me… If only I'd known!

"It was the first time I'd worked with a producer who demanded to hear every single track and basic scrap of a song idea. I'd already had years in the business, and viewed that as a terrible invasion of my privacy, but I agreed to it and some great songs came out of that whole brainstorming process.

"'Mutt' was very professional; a great, beautiful guy, a bit of an old soul, and he remains somebody I still admire very much. He's all but retired now. I still harbour a wish to work with him again some day. We haven't spoken for many, many years, but 'Mutt' was a massive part of what became a vital album for Foreigner – maybe the most important one. Even just to meet him and go to dinner again would be great."

3 *4*
FOREIGNER
Atlantic, 1981

The first three Foreigner albums were all platinum-selling Top-Five hits in America, but their fourth went all the way to No.1, selling more than 10 million copies. Aided by genius producer 'Mutt' Lange, the band peaked on *4*, with kick-ass rock songs in *Urgent* and *Juke Box Hero*, and a subtle, deep-reaching ballad in *Waiting For A Girl Like You*. **JH**

Must hear: *Juke Box Hero*

2 *Boston*
BOSTON
Epic, 1976

The album made by boffin Tom Scholz in his basement was the biggest-selling debut of all time until *Appetite For Destruction* a decade later. Somehow, from such narrow confines Scholz conjured giant soundscapes, achieving melodic-rock perfection in the smash hit single *More Than A Feeling*, its emotional intensity heightened by the majestic wail of singer Brad Delp. **JH**

Must hear: *More Than A Feeling*

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ONE MAN'S VISION

Q&A

Boston multi-instrumentalist Tom Scholz on the band's first album.

Interview: **Paul Elliott**

With the first Boston album the band pretty much invented a new genre of AOR.
Well it's not like I got into music and decided that I had to do this wonderful thing. I just tried to do the best that I could. But I thought I could bring something new to it. Not something earthshakingly new, but just my own twist on it.

You had Brad Delp singing on that album, but most of it was created by you alone. Why was that?
I started out in the early seventies working with other musicians, but it did not produce the result I was looking for.

Meaning what?
I never felt that I got what I was hearing in my mind for the songs. I found that instead of focusing on my imagination and where it would take me with the music, I was focusing on what the other people in the room were thinking about what I was doing. And I found that the interpretation by other musicians was changing the idea that I had, and it was not necessarily changing it in a good way. I hoped that it would add to it, but in fact what it did is it limited it.

When did you decide to go it alone?
It was at the end of 1973. I said to myself: I'm never going to play music with a band again for the purpose of trying to get people to hear it, because it doesn't get presented the way it could and should be. I knew nothing about how other people recorded an album. But I said from now on I'm going to muddle on by myself.

I taught myself about engineering and producing slowly, built some recording equipment and I started in. And immediately the results were so much better. Within a year I had come up with the songs – and more importantly, the recordings of the songs – that would form the basis of the first Boston album.

You did all of this in your home studio?
Yeah, that was in the basement of my apartment house [laughs]. Not your ideal place to record the master for an album. But it was the ideal place for me to work.

What changed when Boston signed to Epic Records?
Nothing! When I got the contract it was totally unexpected, because I'd had nothing but failure up to that point. But I made a promise to myself that this was what worked, this is what enabled me to create music that was worthy of being listened to, and this is the only way that I'm going to do it.

Did the record company trust your instincts?
Oh no. The record company had very different ideas. I was going to be produced by their producer in a major studio, blah blah blah. And I quickly nixed all that – with the help of John Boylan, who was their choice of producer. I actually made the record in my basement, the same way I had made the demos that got me signed, while John had a decoy of some people out in Los Angeles showing up at Capitol Records' studios every day.

But you did record one track for the album out in LA, with a full band line-up.
Yeah, that was *Let Me Take You Home Tonight*. But the rest of that record I did alone in my basement, with Brad [Delp] coming in from time to time.

Brad was such a huge part of that album. His singing – on More Than A Feeling *especially – was out of this world.*
Brad and I had an amazing musical connection. We were so tight after a while. And because of that, we tried enormous numbers of ideas and arrangements and vocal parts. He was also a constant comedian, so we had a really good time working in the studio.

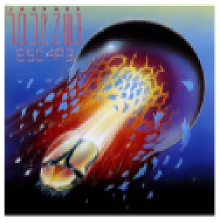
There is so much emotion in More Than A Feeling*. Did it come from your own personal experience?*
That song, like most of the songs I've written, is fairly personal. I'm not saying that all of my songs are about precise experience, but they are observations about life.

You've also described this album, and Boston's music in general, as escapism.
Boston music has been my escape for a long, long time. And I always hoped that it was a sort of escape for people when they put that album on.

And you ended up with what was, until Guns N' Roses came along, the biggest-selling debut in the history of American music.
I never expected success, not ever. I got lucky.

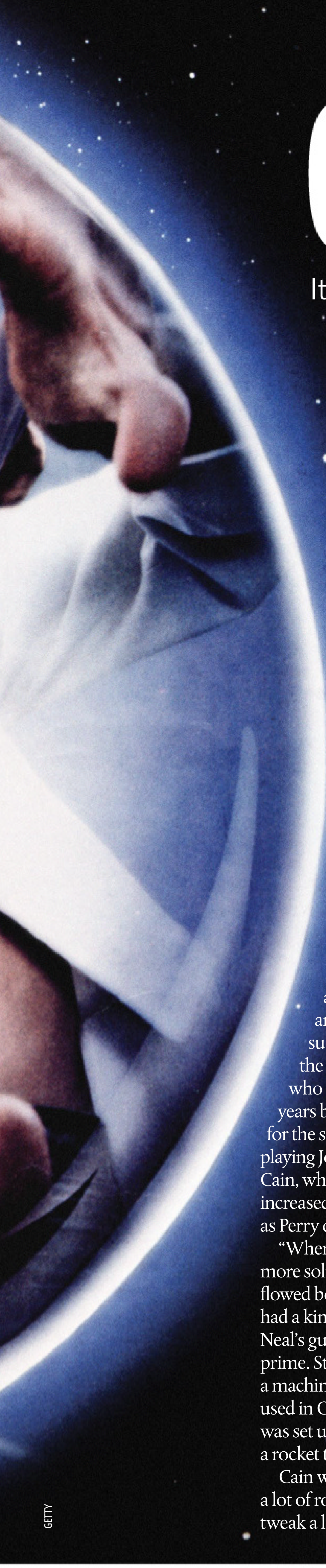
1 *Journey* ESCAPE

(Columbia, 1981)



AOR's shimmering and colossal peak, *Escape* may have its edges dulled by the familiarity of its best-known songs, yet that should not detract from the album's majesty. It pulls together everything that is glorious and important about the genre and distills it sublimely. They may have unkindly christened Steve Perry 'the duck' after some of those high notes, but the critics are simply eating his dirt. *Escape* rules. **JH**

Must hear: *Don't Stop Believin'*



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THE GREAT ESCAPE

It's not just the greatest AOR album ever made, **Journey**'s *Escape* also flies high outside the genre as one of the greatest albums in rock.

Words: **Jon Hotten**

Almost every album that comes to define its genre feels in a way like it has always existed. It coalesces various elements – a sound, a feeling, a particular moment in time – and makes them solid. Think of *Nevermind* or *Appetite For Destruction* or *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, and they seem to hold within them the seeds of what the genre is and where it might go.

It's the same with *Escape*. You can argue forever as to whether it is AOR's greatest album, or even if it's Journey's best (*Raised On Radio* is superior in many ways), but it is inarguably the genre's defining record. Its grip on the culture has grown stronger through the years. From the moment that *Don't Stop Believin'* was used as the final piece of music in *The Sopranos* to the endless cover versions of *Open Arms* on American TV talent shows, *Escape* has become a piece of music that Jonathan Cain said "has lasted somehow. The songs are bigger than we are."

Cain, formerly of The Babys, was Journey's missing piece. When he replaced Greg Rolie, the band left behind their vestigial jazz-rock leanings and refocused on the songs. For a record as apparently seamless as *Escape*, Journey were an interesting factional mix, cliquey and at times suspicious of one another. They were held together by the force of personality of Herbie Herbert, the manager who had brought Steve Perry to the group almost four years before. Ever since, Perry had been engaged in a battle for the spotlight with Neal Schon, around whose guitar playing Journey had originally been built. The addition of Cain, who quickly fell into a writing partnership with Perry, increased the creative tension: "The friction brings the heat," as Perry described it.

"When I joined," Cain said, "I was able to help put the pieces more solidly together. "I think I maybe oiled it and everything flowed better. It was that mix of different personalities – they had a kind of swagger to what they did that I really liked. Neal's guitar playing was incredible. Perry's voice was in its prime. Steve Smith and Ross Valory laid it down. They were a machine. I remember they had this rehearsal warehouse they used in Oakland, and the first time I went there all of my gear was set up. I'd never had that before. The band sounded like a rocket taking off."

Cain was a conduit between Schon and Perry. "Neal had a lot of rock'n'roll ideas that I would go through and maybe tweak a little and present them to Steve in a more nuanced way. Neal had a lot of unstructured melody in his head. I could sometimes add to those melodies and all of a sudden Steve would know what to do with them."

On their first day of writing together, in the attic of their road manager's apartment in San Francisco, Perry played the melody for *Who's Crying Now* on a cassette he'd been storing his ideas on, and within an afternoon the song was written. "We had an instant chemistry," said Cain. At Perry's house they came up with *Open Arms* from a piano part that John Waite had rejected for The Babys. "Too bad for John Waite," Perry remarked after hearing it.

"I think it was probably emotionally not so comforting for Neal to see us writing together," says Perry. "But then we wrote with Neal, too. The *Don't Stop Believin'* stuff we all came up with together. There was a lot of stuff he was involved with co-writing – *Stone In Love*, with that great guitar riff, that one came from Neal."

"Neal brought the fire and attitude," Cain said. "I wasn't conscious of just writing with Steve or just with Neal. It was about the three of us. Together we made it Journey."

Journey rode their creative high, yet even the most cursory listen to *Escape* reveals the aural perfectionism that Perry in particular obsessed over. They were all sound freaks, none more so than the singer, whose knowledge of recording techniques and reproduction were matched only by his desire to get down on tape the things he was hearing in his head. He recalled spending two days in the studio getting the right 'A' sound on the 'arms' line of *Open Arms*, and trying to keep his spectacular longer notes on *Don't Stop Believin'* exactly in tune.

Perry dictated the type of vinyl used for the first pressings of the record, which came out in July 1981, just two weeks after Foreigner's *4*. Tied by serendipity, those two albums would produce AOR's high-water mark. Journey were touring America by private plane and selling out football stadiums years before Bon Jovi and Guns N' Roses surfed the same wave, and they encountered all of the same rock-star strains and excesses.

I once asked Jonathan Cain how *Escape* had affected them. "Well," he said, "I got divorced, Steve broke up with Sherrie [Swafford, the Sherrie of *Oh Sherrie*], families started having an impact, people wanted to do different things. *Frontiers* [released 20 months later] was great – I call *Escape* and *Frontiers* 'the twins'. But it became all-consuming. It couldn't sustain."

History has been kind to *Escape*. As far back as 1988 the readers of *Kerrang!* voted it AOR's greatest album, and there it remains, probably in perpetuity. But beyond the confines of genre it has enjoyed an afterlife bathed in nostalgia for the version of American youth that it captured, a time long gone except in the memory. There, *Escape* lives.

DAVID MCCLISTER

AN OLD HEAD ON YOUNG SHOULDERS

With influences from all points of the musical compass and playing experience way beyond his years, **Marcus King** initially found it "hard to get people to take me seriously". But now they do.

Words: **Polly Glass**

Marcus King isn't what you might expect as the youngest in a Deep South musical bloodline. His father and grandfather are popular players in South Carolina, but the 22-year-old has long forged his own path. His third album, *Carolina Confessions*, is no bog-standard rootsy fare; his take on southern music is richly textured, nodding to Little Feat, the Isley Brothers, Steely Dan, Stevie Ray Vaughan and many more. And it's crammed with worldly character (reflecting on the breakdown of a relationship, like all his records).

Ask him about his favourite records and he veers between eras and styles. "*Pet Sounds* by the Beach Boys would be one," he begins thoughtfully. "*Lonerism* by Tame Impala is another, *Live At Fillmore East* by the Allman Brothers… I'm all over the place as far as inspiration goes."

He's an articulate interviewee and exudes kindly southern courtesy, despite having the sort of hazy voice that's either like he's just waking up or been steeped in pot. A massive Stetson and bright blue shades add to his look that's part Warren Haynes, part spiritual guru.

So far things are working out well for him. Derek Trucks and Warren Haynes are fans and mentors. Back home he's hosted his own two-day festival, The Marcus King Band Family Reunion, for the past two years. Tonight's London gig is packed, and record-label types chatter excitedly about bigger shows in the works. When he eventually goes on stage, the shades come off and he and his band deliver a dextrous fusion of southern rock'n'roll, soul and jazz. This is where he's most at home, and has been for most of his short life.

King's old-soul quality has deep roots, and doesn't apply just to his music. The youngest of two, his childhood was split between suburban Greenville, South Carolina, and the rest of his family up in the Blue Ridge Mountains. There, King would jam old gospel hymns on the porch with his father, aunts, uncles and grandparents. There was always a guitar in the house, and music was part of the fabric of life. "I was also getting spoonfed the Allman Brothers, Marshall Tucker Band, Elmore James, Robert Johnson, what my dad was into," King explains. "And my grandfather was turning me on to George Jones, Merle Haggard, Waylon Jennings…"

Enviable musical foundations for sure, but it left him out of step with his contemporaries.

"I didn't have any friends my own age," he tells us. "All my friends were people like my grandparents. And when I *did* start making friends, when I'd go over I'd end up playing cards with their parents, cos the conversation was more stimulating. So I just had to grow up really quickly."

Performing in his father's blues band, and at the local pentecostal church, aided the process. But although by this point he was listening mostly to powerhouses vocalists like Billie Holiday, Janis Joplin and Aretha Franklin, he was too shy to sing

Marcus King: saved by studying jazz.

"Sometimes the journey is more important than the destination."

Marcus King

himself. So he stuck to the guitar, or drums, whenever he could. Then, when King was 13 a close friend was killed in a car accident and his perspective shifted forever.

"She was a dear friend," he says. "I realised at that point that I couldn't express myself any further with just guitar."

Armed with this new resolve, he started his own band and began singing and writing his own songs. Soon he was making decent money playing gigs in local bars, "enough to help with bills an' stuff", for which he did all the booking and promoting himself.

"It was hard to get people to take me seriously," he recalls. "I was fifteen and all the cats in my band were between thirty-five and fifty, cos I wanted older professional people that wanted to work."

He's since replaced them with the younger band he has today, who he "poached" from other groups.

School life didn't improve, however. Disinterest, tardiness and falling asleep in class after gig nights led to threats of juvenile detention centres.

"I've always loved learning, if it was something I felt was gonna benefit me later on," he reasons. "So in English I would excel because I wanted to expand my vocabulary to benefit what I'd already decided to be. But it became frustrating, because they would treat me as if I was a delinquent. I really wasn't, I was just disinterested."

In the end the thing that got him through high school ("well, almost") was an elective class in jazz theory and performance. There he became immersed in the kind of sounds that form a big part of his music today.

"That was my saving grace, man," he beams. "Five times a week I'd go to learn about this fantastic style of music that was birthed on American soil. I thought it was such a hip thing, I'd be learning all these cool jazz standards and really learning music theory. That's what got me through."

Although he has happy memories of family jams and supportive relatives, King's early life appears to be shrouded in a cloak of sadness. His mother left when he was four, but remained "in and out of the picture", and he concedes that there was "a lot going on at home". As a child he saw a therapist a few times, and at one point (much later) contemplated pursuing psychiatry himself – or the priesthood. He keeps the details guarded, but it seems safe to say that the emotional weight of his music is informed by real pain.

"I love my mother dearly, but that was a hard thing for me when I was younger," he says. "Those were difficult times, and there were a lot of things that happened when I was a kid that weren't ideal, y'know, and it kinda seemed like things would never get better at some point. But they did, so I was able to create from that pain. All I ever want to tell people is if you have any kind of hurt, you need to find some kind of outlet or else you will implode."

On the back of *Carolina Confessions*, King and his band are poised for more shows in 2019, and he's looking to move to Nashville, having fallen in love with the place while recording there.

"There's still things that are on my heart, that moulded me into who I am, that I still haven't figured out how to put into words," he muses, part anxious youth, part wise old sage. "And that's a constant reminder that sometimes the journey is more important than the destination."

Carolina Confessions is out now via Snakefarm Records.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO STEVE HACKETT

As he gears up for the release of his new solo album, the guitarist reflects on being a morning person, struggling with down time, the joys of travel and what it feels like being the son of Superman.

Interview: **Philip Wilding**

Steve Hackett's twenty-sixth studio album, *At The Edge Of Light*, reflects the former Genesis guitarist's (he left after 1976's *Wind & Wuthering*) continuing musical journey around the globe, soaking up environments and influences along the way.

While his solo-career trajectory continues apace, next year sees Hackett revisiting two of his musical totems: his former band Genesis's 1973 album *Selling England By The Pound*, and his 1979 solo record *Spectral Mornings*. In our conversation Hackett talks about travel, making music, the future, the past and the power of being in the moment. He's eloquent, ruminative and happy to drift off topic frequently; as he puts it: "I digress because I like to digress. I'm tired of all the straight stuff people do."

I DO MY BEST WORK AS THE DAY BEGINS

I get up awfully early. I find it helps the creative juices and helps me physically. I'm not much good at night. I might get five minutes of poetry down just before I fall off to sleep, but I seem to be able to function better in the morning. There's less going on, there's no call on my time. It's the time to operate by stealth and silence, before life starts.

TRAVEL REALLY DOES BROADEN THE MIND

I travel for inspiration, but I would travel anyway. As a seven-year-old, my family emigrated – unsuccessfully – to Canada. But I did get to visit and spend four months there and went to school there and it fired me up for travel. At the same time it filled me with fear, as it made inroads into the family and made things very difficult coming back. I'd seen the wider world, and it seemed like they were determined to knock you down again at school when we got home. But I had seen the Rockies, I'd seen the Atlantic, I'd seen icebergs. It was like travelling through the Wild West and suddenly you were in this time machine and back in the forties or fifties in crumbling Pimlico. It does affect you and turn you inward when you undergo an extreme experience like that. You can't be rewired to be smaller after all those experiences.

I TRY TO SOAK UP MY ENVIRONMENT, WHEREVER IT IS

We were in Petra a few weeks ago, out in the desert with the Bedouin, sitting around the fire. That was extraordinarily rewarding because I was seeing nothing. But the wilderness was remarkable. This nothingness is very primal and very basic. It's an amazing thing. It stays with you forever. The desert will always be in my head. I've spent time looking for the voice of the desert, trying to capture the spirit that's out there – can we make this work, can I do this with a guitar, sustain and frozen reverb, as spooky as hell, will that capture it?

THE WORLD'S GETTING SMALLER, BUT WE'RE CLOSING MORE BORDERS

When I make an album, for example, a drummer in Iceland will send me his performance, we have the technology to do that kind of thing. Whereas politicians are telling us we ought to be arming ourselves to the teeth, cutting ourselves off from the rest of the world. But where does that leave us? It takes us back to the Dark Ages. We don't really need countries any more, we don't need borders, we just need to work with the best people in every field, so that we will cure cancer and we will make a better world. But without everyone's brain on it we're not going to bloody well do it, we'll just fade away. It's fortress mentality, and it's been shown that it doesn't work. It does my head in. We should be celebrating culture, embracing things.

"I've spent time looking for the voice of the desert, trying to capture the spirit that's out there – can we make this work?"

SOMETIMES IT'S AS IMPORTANT TO LOOK DOWN AS IT IS UP

You can always spend your time thinking: "I'm always the bridesmaid and never the bride", or you can go: "I've been extraordinarily lucky to do the things I've done." There are people who would love to even own a Marshall amp and a Les Paul. When I was a kid staring into shop windows, I used to think that anyone who had that had already made it. Success for me is being engaged in the medium, not how it does in the marketplace. When we did [Genesis's 1973 album] *Selling England By The Pound* and we couldn't get a gig in the States, John Lennon gave an interview and said we were one of the bands that he was listening to. That's worth celebrating more than anything else. That means a lot to me.

SOME RECORDS TAKE ON A LIFE OF THEIR OWN

Every time you make an album, you do the same thing: you plug in and play and celebrate the things you write. But I think that those two albums, *Selling England* and *Spectral Mornings*, they're magical. With *England* I seem to recall a lot of things getting written in the rehearsal room, and in the main I just brought in riffs and I said here's this, here's this. I think it was more instrumentally led, perhaps, than many of the other Genesis albums, and I was thrilled at that as someone who was mainly a player at the time.

Something special happened. The first track alone, *Dancing With The Moonlit Knight*, travelled through the Scottish plains to something like Elgar. It's an amazing song. It doesn't falter, even though at the end we're doing the

TINA KORHONEN/PRESS

Hackett live and in the studio with his beloved Gibson Les Paul.

quietest improvisation that any band has ever done. It goes through all sorts of techniques; jazz fusion, psychedelic. And to Phil's [Collins] credit, he was able to do the right thing behind all of these disparate, angular-sounding riffs and salvos and make it swing. It's a real adventure and I just love it.

I USED TO WORK MYSELF INTO THE GROUND MAKING MUSIC

Spectral Mornings was the first solo album I was hugely confident about. There was a great feeling in the team, we had a lot of laughs, and we recorded in Holland in sub-zero temperatures where all you could do was work. It was impossible to sleep. We'd get back at three or four in the morning and then the cleaners would come in at six and make a very real din upstairs. So I did that album on very little sleep.

I had a history of falling over doing albums in those days. I would keep working and working and I'd end up in hospital or unable to move, literally. So at the end of *Spectral Mornings* people were sending me back mixes and I'm hanging on to the walls at home going: "A bit more tambourine in the left-hand corner!" I was just trying to give it everything. I wasn't very sensible, but that helps to bring something to it.

"I started winning bets and taking money off people by playing the national anthem through my nose."

I STILL FIND IT VERY HARD TO DO DOWN TIME

I suppose I don't really do that much relaxing – all work and no play. I'm aware that the clock is ticking, I think it's the same for my brother as well. He's doing the same thing where he's coming up with an album all the time, and I say 'how's that' and he's on to the next one. We Hackett brothers are cut from the same cloth in a way.

MY FATHER WAS AN AMAZING MAN

My dad was an extraordinary, accomplished guy. There were twenty things that he was capable of doing, each of which could have been a career for him. If only I'd inherited more of those things. But it's a bit like being son of Superman. I came away with one gift, which was to be able to fly on the guitar. My dad was able to do many more things – jump out of aeroplanes, play cricket and football to an extraordinary standard, make furniture, paint… He had all these gifts. But I seem to be a specialist in one area, and the other jobs that I had I tended to get fired from. I was pretty useless.

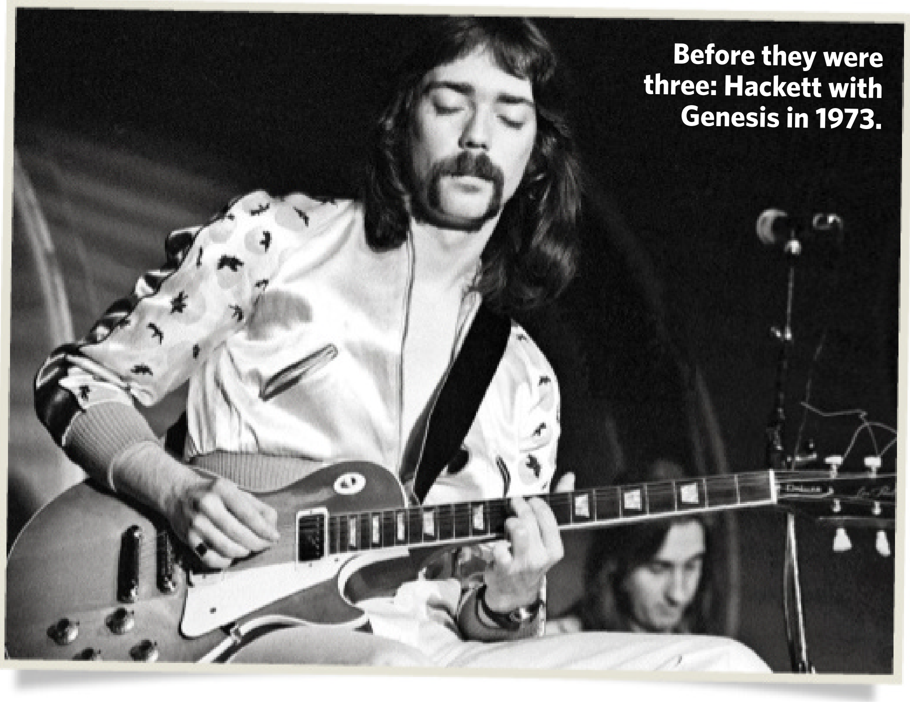
MUSIC MADE SENSE TO ME FROM A VERY EARLY AGE

I was trying to be just like my dad, as he was so musical. I was two and trying to play the mouth organ just like him, and even as a two year old I took it very seriously. My mother tells me I used to have this little case, and take it out on the Tube. She said I used to play the same tune over and over again. I got a chromatic when I was five and my repertoire was *Dixon Of Dock Green* on a good day, you don't want to know the rest. But I started winning bets and taking money off people by playing the national anthem through my nose. I got an idea that maybe this music lark might be a good wheeze for when I got older. I started messing around with the guitar when I was twelve.

I got really interested when I was fourteen, when I was big enough to get my arms around this huge guitar that my dad had with a brutal action and terrible strings. But I fought on – and the fight's still going on. I was playing something yesterday and I was fighting for every phrase, and I thought: "I've got to crack this again."

I'M HAPPY LOOKING FORWARD AS WELL AS BACK

I figured I have the choice of honouring the past or taking people into the future, and I'll do both those things for lots of reasons. It's a privilege to do the stuff I once believed in – I don't do anything I don't believe in. But I am flexible. I have to be. It's nice to be able to do both, it's nice to keep the museum doors open. But beyond the money there are all sorts of other things going on. I am really proud of the new album and I'll be doing lots of it at some point. It's just steps in an ongoing journey. The important thing is to keep going and stick to your guns. It's a great joy to do that whether it's old or new. It's all part of the same spirit that drives it. It's still the same vessel, and time is extraordinarily elastic. If I'm doing *Selling England*, I won't be thinking: 'This stuff is how old?!' It's forty-six years ago, which is extraordinary. But you have to trust yourself, and bet on yourself, and that only comes with time. ●

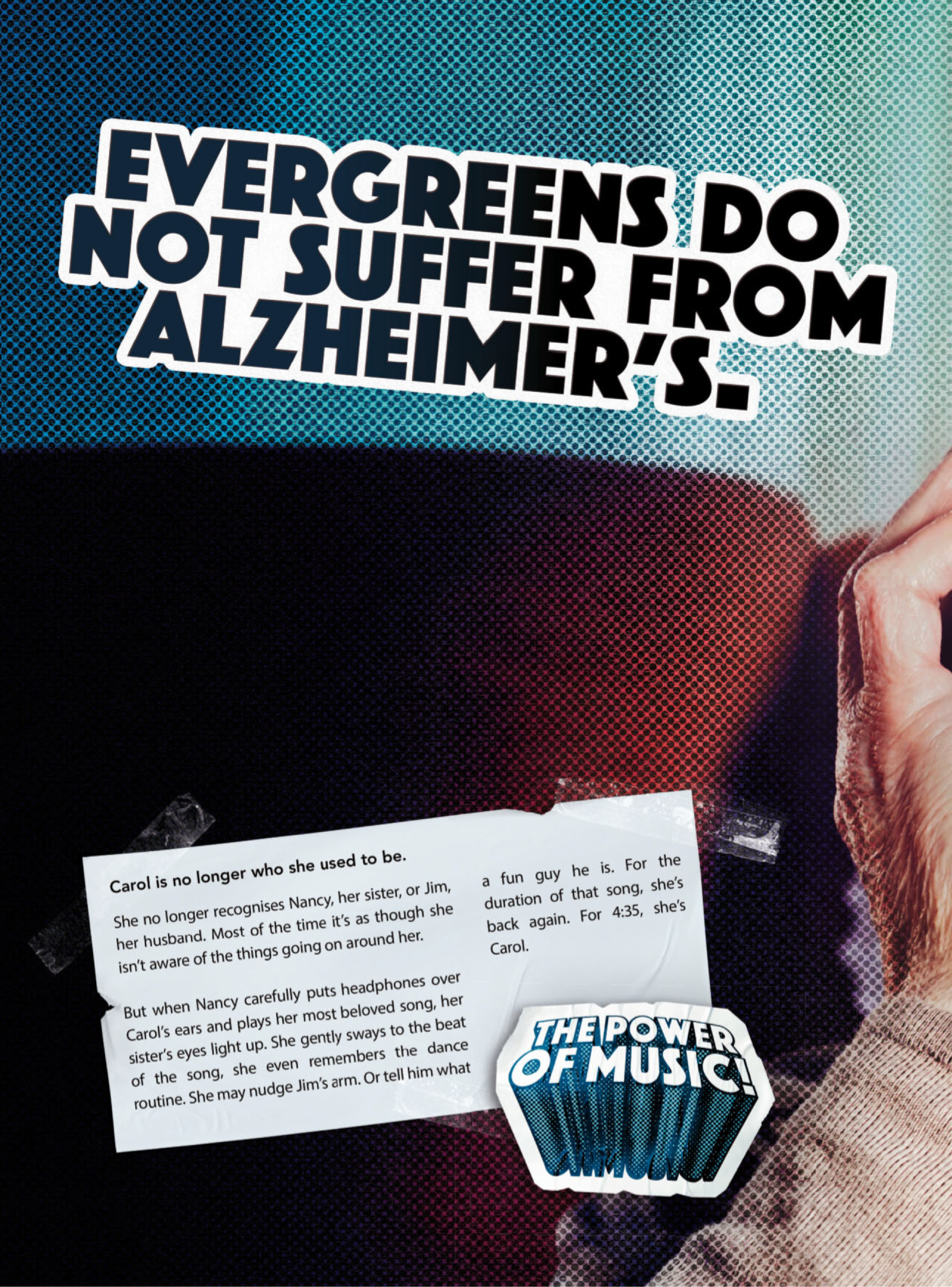


Before they were three: Hackett with Genesis in 1973.

At The Edge Of Light is out on January 25 via InsideOut. Steve Hackett tours the UK in November.

TOP LEFT: KEVIN NIXON; TOP RIGHT: ROB MONK; BOTTOM: GETTY

TOGETHER WE'RE
LOUDER
LOUDERSOUND.COM
ROCK
HAMMER
PROG
BLUES


EVERGREENS DO NOT SUFFER FROM ALZHEIMER'S.
Carol is no longer who she used to be.
She no longer recognises Nancy, her sister, or Jim, her husband. Most of the time it's as though she isn't aware of the things going on around her.
But when Nancy carefully puts headphones over Carol's ears and plays her most beloved song, her sister's eyes light up. She gently sways to the beat of the song, she even remembers the dance routine. She may nudge Jim's arm. Or tell him what a fun guy he is. For the duration of that song, she's back again. For 4:35, she's Carol.
THE POWER OF MUSIC!

thomann
MUSIC IS OUR PASSION

CLASSIC ROCK

ON THIS MONTH'S FREE DIGITAL ALBUM...

BLOODSHOT RECORDS SAMPLER 2019

Stereo
Can also be played on mono equipment

15 scorching tracks from our rootsy friends at Bloodshot Records bring much-needed warmth to these getting-colder days. Expect countrified tones, punk, blues and rock'n'roll all the way.

1 Robbie Fulks & Linda Gail Lewis

Wild Wild Wild

It's wild alright, in a lovably 50s-inspired sort of way. Grammy nominee Fulks and his partner in crime Lewis have cooked up a hearty gumbo of rockabilly tones, honky-tonk piano and the kind of vocal harmonies that would make Johnny Cash and his missus smile approvingly.

From *Wild! Wild! Wild!*
https://robbiefulks.bandcamp.com

2 Ha Ha Tonka

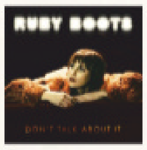
Race To The Bottom

A soaring indie roots-rock ballad, from a Missouri group described as sitting "at the crossroads of Americana and indie, where Alabama meets Arcade Fire". Lead singer Brian Roberts is a cancer survivor who's criticised the American healthcare system, and for all its prettiness this track feels quietly urgent in sentiment.

From *Heart-Shaped Mountain*
www.hahatonkamusic.com

3 Ruby Boots

Believe In Heaven



Aussie singer Bex Chilcott, aka Ruby Boots, is now a Music City resident, and this track was recorded in Dallas with hotshot collective the Texas Gentlemen. Swirling together a cool mix of outlaw sensibilities (twangy Americana, gutsy rock'n'roll, garage grit) this is the renegade side of roots music. And we like it.

From *Don't Talk About It*
www.rubybootsmusic.com

4 Laura Jane Grace & The Devouring Mothers

Apocalypse Now (& Later)

A slice of troubadour goodness from Against Me!'s Laura Jane Grace and her rootsy, Tom Petty-nodding new band. At just over two minutes, maybe this is what Americana sounds like on a punk schedule?

From *Bought To Rot*
https://laurajanegracethedevouringmothers.bandcamp.com/

5 Sarah Shook & The Disarmers

New Ways To Fail

'If you had your way I'd be some kind of proper laydee...' quoth North Carolina country-punk troubadour Sarah Shook, in the kind of drawl that suggests she'd sooner tell her subject to go do one. Dulcet noises that pack an emotionally raw punch.

From *Years*
www.disarmers.com

6 William Elliott Whitmore

Busted

Your *'bills are all due and the baby needs shoes'*. What are you gonna do? If you're William Elliott Whitmore, you write a song about it. Inspired lyrically by family life on a farm in Iowa, his music paints alt.country/folk pictures of very human strife.

From *Kilonova*
www.williamelliottwhitmore.com

7 Luke Winslow-King

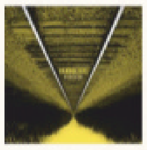
Chicken Dinner

There's a Paul Simon-esque lightness of touch to Winslow-King's mesh of blues, Stax soul and rock'n'roll. Born in Michigan but heavily informed by 15 years in New Orleans, he cuts a smooth musical figure.

From *Blue Mesa*
www.lukewinslowking.com

8 Vandoliers

Troublemaker



Galloping, rattling guitars, blasts of brass and fiddle, pleasingly shouty vocals... We imagine this being a hoot at a house party, at that sweaty point in the early hours when everyone's having a good knees-up and long-since given up trying to be cool.

From *Forever*
http://vandoliers.com/

9 Barrence Whitfield & The Savages

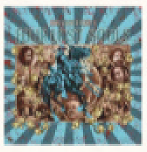
Tall Black & Bitter

Ahh, the sweet, swinging sound of classic old-school 12-bar blues getting driven – in a stolen Chevy – down to some hoppin' dive bar in the South. God bless you, Barrence Whitfield and your Savages.

From *Soul Flowers Of Titan*
http://barrencewhitfieldsavages.com

10 Jon Langford's Four Lost Souls

Natchez Trace



Welshman and Bloodshot staple Langford cut his teeth in punk bands, but swiftly made his name as one of the first people to really combine punk and country in single delicious musical dishes, like this one.

From *Four Lost Souls*
https://jonlangford.bandcamp.com/

11 Murder By Death

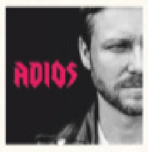
Bloom

Stylish, atmospheric indie rock from Indiana, mixing synths and other subtle electronic touches into driving, roots-laced guitars and drums. The sort of ambitious but underdog-ish tones that U2 would have killed for.

From *The Other Shore*
https://murderbydeath.com/

12 Cory Branan

Imogene



A nostalgic reflection on young love that didn't work out. In the tradition of 'American blokes with beards and/or tattoos and acoustic guitars' (Ryan Adams, Chuck Ragan) one should never overlook Cory Branan. Especially not on the strength of such stirring cocktails of indie-pop rock, roots and Americana as this one.

From *Adios*
www.corybranan.com

13 Banditos

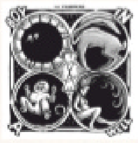
Healin' Slow

As we approach the end of this sampler, a proper slowie for you. And what a gorgeous one this is at the hands of southern six-piece Banditos. Singer Mary Beth Richardson is the star turn here, mixing old and new soul into a refleshingly unclichéd country ballad, which climaxes in beautifully chest-swelling fashion.

From *Visionland*
www.banditosband.com

14 The Yawpers

Mon Dieu



From noisiest Denver, a tantalisingly unhinged hybrid of dark country, Cramps/MC5/Stooges-y garage blues and punked-up aggression. Thought countrified music was all plaid and Jesus? Think again.

From *Boy In A Well*
www.theyawpers.com

15 Scott H Biram

Long Old Time

We complete our Bloodshot tour with blues harmonica and mournful country sentiments, all bound up in a velvety southern gothic package. Think the White Buffalo-meets-an old Western soundtrack.

From *The Bad Testament*
http://scottbiram.com/

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Simply head to the following URL:

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THE

HARD STUFF

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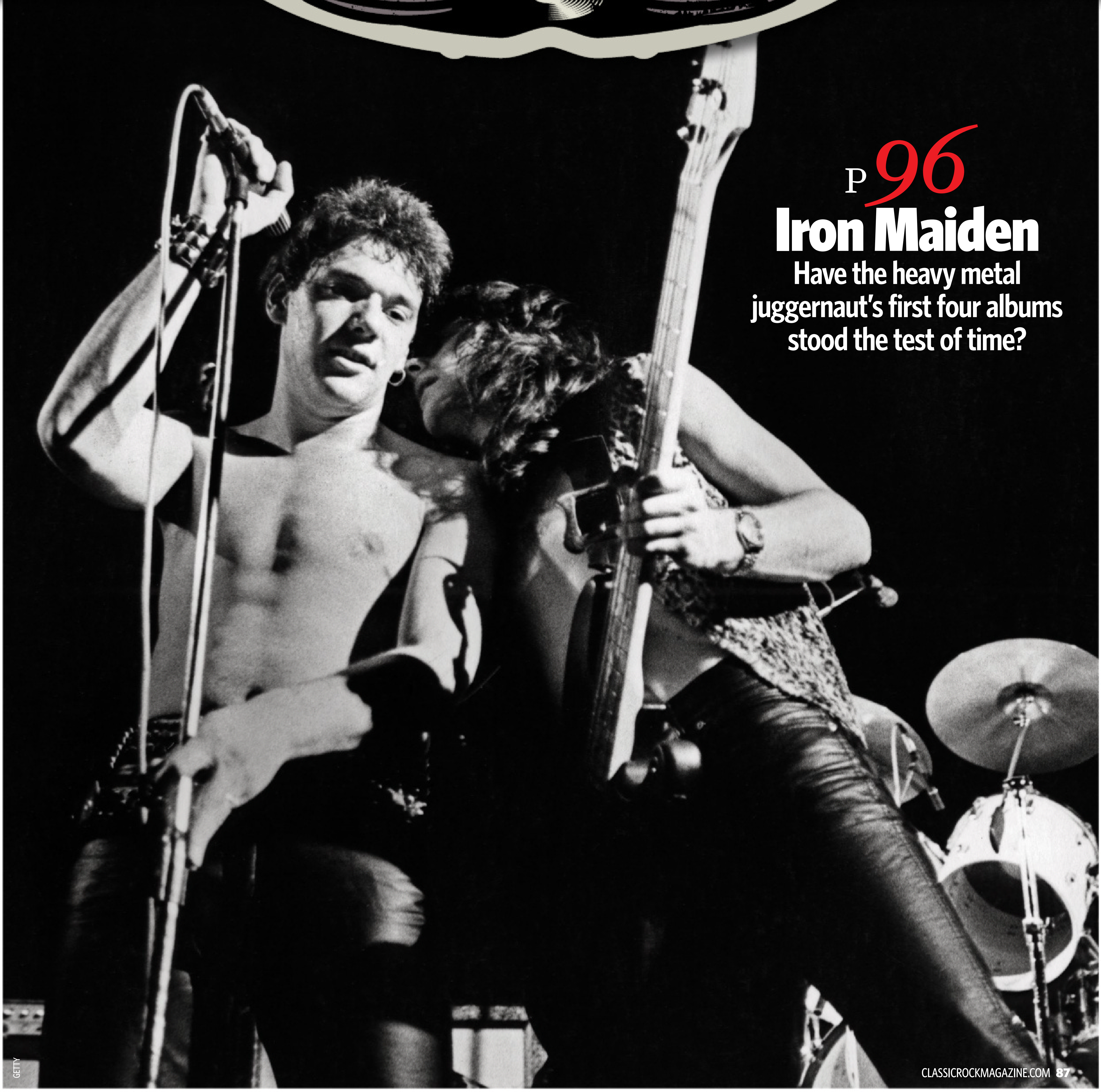
Edited By Ian Fortnam
ian.fortnam@futurenet.com



P96

Iron Maiden

Have the heavy metal juggernaut's first four albums stood the test of time?

GETTY

THE HARD STUFF ALBUMS

Rival Sons

Feral Roots LOW COUNTRY SOUND/ATLANTIC

Long Beach rockers' sixth album twists and turns and ultimately triumphs.

You're 10 years into your career. The world, which has moved steadily away from the high-class rock'n'roll you hold dear, suddenly shifts as four Led Zep-alike kids appear and do gangbusters out of nowhere. What do you do? If you're Scott Holiday and Jay Buchanan, you decamp to a shack in Northern Tennessee and plot the album that just might make you.

When it comes down to it, the phrase 'it's a grower' can be a polite code for 'it's a bit shit'. It's like the scene in *Friends* when Monica describes Rachel's new nanny as "attractive in an obvious way", and Ross says: "Yeah, obvious beauty's the worst… Me, I like to have to work to find someone attractive. Makes me feel like I earned it." And who wants to 'earn' affection for a record? It's rock'n'roll, not *War And Peace*.

However, there are times when a slow-burn style is what makes an album special. To use a booze-based analogy, if *Pressure And Time* was Rival Sons' tequila shot and *Great Western Valkyrie* the serious bourbon, then *Feral Roots* is the fine wine – intriguing from the get go, with certain rock tropes that grab you by the throat while others materialise tantalisingly. That said, opener *Do You Worst* gets down to business instantly with a juddering 'na-na-na-na-na-nah!' juggernaut of a riff. Straight in, no kissing – you can practically hear Greta Van Fleet gulp nervously. Tracks like *Back In The Woods* put the 'feral' in *Feral Roots*, with Buchanan's raw soul-blues cry hitting possessed-preacher highs and drummer Michael Miley on thunderous form.

But it's the brooding mix of urgent and mysterious tones that really pulls you in, and gives the whole album an almost cinematic quality. The Zeppelin-esque title track is a stunning embodiment of this, its acoustic lines of folky mystique trickling out before bursting into a commanding, full-on rock chorus. Tracks that seem to be one thing have a way of surprising you (see the gorgeous chorus gear shift of *Imperial Joy*). Gospel backing singers appear across the record, and the soulful sway of *Stood By Me* merges old-school blues-and-soul warmth with Isley Brothers-infused guitar blasts.

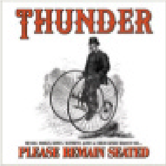
Feral Roots isn't Rival Sons' most instant album yet; this isn't a record of tracks like *Keep On Swinging* and *Open My Eyes*. It's *partly* that, but it's also an album of depth and impact that merits luxuriant poring over. And perhaps most significantly, it's the sound of 2019's answer to Page and Plant throwing down the gauntlet, daring the competition to make their moves. Bring it on.

Polly Glass

Thunder

Please Remain Seated BMG

Thunder stripped back and laid bare.



Twenty-eight years ago, I sat on Thunder's tour bus outside the Paradiso in Amsterdam. It was late, and even while some girls tried to pull him away, guitarist Luke Morley wanted to play me a new song he'd written for their second album. Moments like these aren't rare, and I was ready to run rather than listen to half a musical idea bolstered by a muddy mix. I couldn't have been more wrong. The keening demo version of *Low Life In High Places* was a beautiful sketch of a song, filled with promise and life. So much so that the finished version never sounded quite as good to me when parent album *Laughing On Judgement Day* finally arrived.

That song reappears on *Please Remain Seated*, this time piano-led before it turns into a mournful elegy buoyed by a male voice choir; it is, remarkably, the unexpected left that feels right. This collection of reworked songs from the Thunder catalogue mostly eschews the straight acoustic cover for gentle swing, blues and the occasional jazz note, from a band live in the studio, reflecting on a remarkable musical life well lived.

Philip Wilding

Papa Roach

Who Do You Trust?

ELEVEN SEVEN MUSIC

Cali nu metal grunts attempt to keep up with the times.

Modern rock bands have had to evolve to prosper – rope in a rapper here, swap a guitarist for an electronics whizz there, deck yourself out in geometric-print shirts…

Who Do You Trust? is Papa Roach's not entirely convincing attempt to muscle in on the action. Traces of their old sound remain, but for the most part they've gone for the pop jugular. With their rattling digital rhythms and processed guitars, *Elevate* and *Top Of The World* come on like a TK Maxx Imagine Dragons. Not a crime, true, but the stench of cynical trend-chasing is so overwhelming that it should come with a free clothes peg to put on your nose.

When they do revert to type, as on the 15-years-past-its-sell-by-date Rage Against The Machine knock-off *Renegade Music*, it serves only to amplifiy the gulf between who Papa Roach want to be and who they really are.

Dave Everley

Jah Wobble

The Butterfly Effect

JAH WOBBLE

Cockney bassist takes on the world, the City and five-star hotels.

It's been a long, strange trip for the former John Wardle since he left Public Image almost 40 years ago, but, whether working with Ginger Baker on 1990's thunderous *Middle Passage* or with his Chinese wife on the East-meets-West collaboration that was 2008's *Chinese Dub*, the sole constant has been his floor-quaking bass.

On new album *The Butterfly Effect* it anchors a set of Wobble's 10-year-old poems revolving around the global financial crash, all intoned in best Bow Bells tones. Those uncompromising vocals become jarring, but when he grumbles: *'I flashed my cheeky cockney accent… she thought I was a bloody Kiwi'* on the dream-like *I Love Your Accent*, he's oddly charming. He's at his best on the mighty title track, in which chainsaw guitars compete against clattering drums and Wobble's delightfully bonkers musings on Fred Astaire, the Black Death, Ringo Starr and creationists. Nothing else comes close to it, and Wobble's feistiness remains undimmed.

John Aizlewood

Baskery

Coyote & Sirens

MOTHER TARANTULA

Salvaged songs from the Bondesson sisters.

Due to a music industry in turmoil *Coyote & Sirens*, Baskery's fourth album, almost never saw the light of day. Signed to a major label and relocated to Los Angeles from their Nashville base, the Swedish folk-rock band of sisters Greta, Stella and Sunniva Bondesson ended up out on their ear and fighting to get their songs back when the execs holding the purse strings got cold feet about the whole thing.

RICK HORN/PRESS

Thankfully, justice prevailed, and so we have this collection of Americana with a distinctly Nordic twist, a sense of wildness twitching at the borders, the trio marvelling at the stray cats and coyotes making the urban jungle their playground. At their poppiest, Baskery could easily go up alongside the likes of the Dixie Chicks or even Haim, yet there's a raw raucousness and spiky attitude to their music and lyrics that contrast beautifully with their honeyed vocals, jabbing like splinters snagging velvet.

Emma Johnston

Bring Me The Horizon

Amo SONY

The guitars have finally left the building…

'Some kid on the 'gram said he used to be a fan but this shit ain't heavy metal…' So goes *Heavy Metal*, the mid-point track of *Amo*, a record which is hyper aware of just how divisive it is.

Bring Me The Horizon started to dabble in electronica and pop on 2015's *That's The Spirit*, and now they've really taken the plunge. Singles *Wonderful Life* and *Mantra* suggest the band haven't quite slammed the door on rock, but anyone hoping they'd return to their metalcore roots will be disappointed, and perhaps a little horrified, when they hear Oli Syke's auto-tuned vocals kick in on *Ouch*. Skittering beats and choppy samples reminiscent of Justin Bieber's *Purpose* are scattered liberally, while absolute standout *Nihilist Blues* features Grimes and fully embraces her futuristic digital-pop aesthetic.

This is a super-modern, rock-tinged record and needs to be considered on those terms, but it's undoubtedly BMTH's bravest move yet.

Dannii Leivers

Amy Rigby

The Old Guys SOUTHERN DOMESTIC

Vocalist's tributes to men of standing and repute.

There really is no one quite like Amy Rigby. Despite having both a voice and penchant for American melodies that suggests the work of Gillian Welch or Laura Cantrell, Rigby has an edge and force to her work that suggests *Beggars Banquet* Stones or Bob Dylan at his most Judas-y. Combine that with a penchant for rough-edged production, the occasional presence of husband Eric Goulden on guitar, and a collection of songs which are both wistful and acerbic, and you have *The Old Guys*.

Like a one-woman garage-band Joni Mitchell, Amy Rigby sings about, well, old guys – there's *from philiproth@gmail to rzimmerman@aol.com*, which imagines Roth emailing Dylan about the latter's Nobel-prize conversation (*'When they lay that medal on your wicked heart'*); there's a tribute song called *Robert Altman*; and there's *The Old Guys* itself, a Stonesy eulogy to the old dudes. Ending on the chiming rocker *One Off* (another tribute song to some other guy), *The Old Guys* is a kind of tribute album that deserves a kind of tribute album all of its own.

David Quantick

Dog Eat Dog

Brand New Breed METALVILLE

Nineties rap-rock C-listers' unneccessary return.

Hats off to Dog Eat Dog for making a comeback record that nobody asked for. *Brand New Breed*, a compilation of two gig-only EPs, arrives 13 years after the New Jersey band's last album, *Wanted*, and 25 years after their flash-in-the-pan-popular debut *All Boro Kings*.

Their Beastie Boys-in-clown-shoes shtick hasn't aged well, which is saying something given it was pretty ropey first time around. The arthiritic rap-rock of *XXV* and the anaemic, island-hopping dub of *Lumpy Dog* fizz with all the urban cred of a BBC newsreaders' conference, while *Emoji Baby*'s brass-assisted punk honks in every sense of the term.

In its favour, *Brand New Breed* is mercifully short at eight tracks. They could have made it even shorter by cutting the risible acoustic versions of 90s 'hits' *Isms* and *Rocky*. Or just done everyone a solid and not bothered at all.

Dave Everley

DarWin

Origin Of Species

AUTONOMY RADIO

Part-man, part computer sorts out global warming and nuclear war.

It's 2028, and post-nuclear planet Earth is ecologically wrecked. A survivor, DarWin, is transformed by some women into a time-travelling human/computer. Naturally he embarks on a quest to save the world and find his family. It's an endearingly daft (after its opening tsunami of *Pet Sounds*-style wizardry, *Gummy Bear* begins *'Gummy bear, do you even care'*) saga, and there's a graphic novel to go with the album, but musically it's watertight and its fearsome guitars are underpinned by Crosby, Stills & Nash-style West Coast harmonies.

It's the brainchild of veteran drummer Simon Phillips and Elton John's current bassist Matt Bissonette, and at its best it's enormous: the seven-minute *Escape The Maze* encompasses Steve Vai-esque guitars, orchestras and relentless drumming. At the end of it all, DarWin have saved the concept album as well as the planet.

John Aizlewood

Purser Deverill

Square One MIGHTY MUSIC

A tale of two Tygers.

Tygers Of Pan Tang fans may recall that as well as the radio-friendly material from outside songwriters forced on the band by their label MCA for *The Cage* (1982), vocalist John Deverill and guitarist Fred Purser turned in some strong songs of their own. After the band split in '83, the pair continued their collaboration.

Despite having been recorded at a pace that makes Def Leppard appear hasty, *Square One* sounds surprisingly fresh. Melodic, gutsy hard rock with a subtle prog garnish is the order of the day (think UFO, FM and *90125*-era Yes), and the quality of writing on tracks like *Travel The World* and *Square One* are impressive, as are the duo's still-sharp vocal and guitar chops.

Rich Davenport

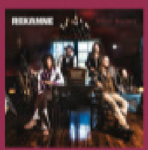
ROUND-UP: MELODIC ROCK

By Dave Ling

Roxanne: an album that's among the most flawless within the genre over the past 12 months.

Roxanne

Radio Silence RAT PAK



Roxanne is among the most perfect AOR band names of all time. Which is fortuitous, as the aptly titled *Radio Silence* – released 30 years after a self-titled debut – is right up there among the most flawless records made within the genre over the past 12 months. Despite the band denting the US Top 75 with a stab at Wild Cherry's *Play That Funky Music*, their label did little to promote Roxanne, who broke up after a year of schlepping around clubs.

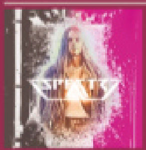
Where their demise was timid, this rebirth is the polar opposite – Roxanne have come out swinging, with a comeback record blessed with confidence and swagger, finesse and flair and no small amount of sun-kissed Californian charm.

Someone To Kill and *Girls Alright* fuse Queen and Foreigner, while the muscular *Super Bad* nods at heyday-era Warrant. King's X frontman Dug Pinnick and Korn drummer Ray Luzier make appearances, but the real greatness of *Radio Silence* lies in its songs, from the smooth groove of *Thin Blue Line* and *I Don't Want To Live This Way*'s subtle, insistent charm, to *First Mistake*.

Kenny Leckremo's Spectra

Kenny Leckremo's Spectra

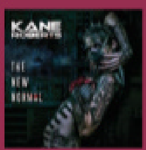
DREAM IN COLOUR



Like the first incarnation of H.e.a.t, which he fronted until 2010, the return of Kenny Leckrem is less inclined to sprinkle you with spittle or sport a Mohican than its current Erik Grönwall-voiced counterpart. *Kenny Leckremo's Spectra* is solid rather than spectacular, but its high points are well worth experiencing.

Kane Roberts

The New Normal FRONTIERS



Alice Cooper's former muscle-man guitarist may have played one of the most spectacularly inept gigs ever witnessed by this writer (Firefest 2011), but aided by a cast of Cooper alumni including Kip Winger, Paul Taylor, Ken Mary, Nita Strauss and Alice himself, plus Halestorm's Lzzy Hale, Kane Roberts proves with this record that he still knows his way around a recording studio.

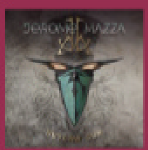
Toby Hitchcock

Reckoning FRONTIERS

Fifteen years ago, ex-Survivor man Jim Peterik discovered singer Toby Hitchcock for the band Pride Of Lions. Murder Of My Sweet's Daniel Flores is the musical director of this, Hitchcock's second solo album. Trouble is, Flores is no Jim Peterik, and neither is he Erik Mårtensson, the brains behind its predecessor *Mercury's Down*, and all too often the gap shows.

Jerome Mazza

Outlaw Son ESCAPE MUSIC



The former voice of 1990s Christian metallers Angelica, Pittsburgh native Jerome Mazza drew recent attention recently via singer Steve Walsh's solo record *Black Butterfly*. Lyrics and backing vocals here are from FM's Steve Overland, with the much-travelled Tommy Denander contributing music and guitar, but this album suggests Mazza could have a strong future in his own right.

Venom

Storm The Gates SPINEFARM

Still crazy after all these years.

In the late-90s, when Conrad Lant, aka Cronos, returned to his rightful place as frontman of Satan-invoking head-bangers Venom, he was bluntly dismissive of bands that had worshipped his own. Earlier that decade, Norwegian black metal – inspired by and named after Venom's seminal 1982 album – had developed in a cult-like scene, with band members committing arson attacks on churches, the violence culminating in the grisly murder of Mayhem's leader, Oystein Aarseth, by rival Varg Vikernes of the band Burzum. "If you make music you're a musician," Lant said. "But if you kill someone you're just a murderer."

Norwegian black metal was an unwanted legacy for Venom, entirely at odds with the pride Lant felt in his band's influence on Metallica, Slayer and subsequent exponents of extreme music. He also described the Norwegian bands as fraudulent. "There's only one black metal band," he said, "and that's Venom." What he had not anticipated was the farcical situation he now finds himself in – as leader of one of two versions of Venom.

A rival band named Venom Inc. features the two other members of the classic Venom line-up that made *Black Metal* – guitarist Jeff Dunn (alias Mantas) and drummer Tony Bray (Abaddon) – plus bassist/vocalist Tony 'The Demolition Man' Dolan, who replaced Lant in Venom in the late 80s. The first Venom Inc. album, *Avé*, released in 2017, contained echoes of the past in the punk-metal noise mixed with industrial rock textures. But in Venom's glory days Lant was always the dominant figure – his voice a mighty roar, and his monstrous bass sound once memorably described as "the pumping black heart of Venom". And it's his OTT persona – a Geordie Gene Simmons – that makes his Venom the genuine article.

Storm The Gates is the third album Lant has made with guitarist Stuart 'Rage' Dixon and drummer Danny 'Dante' Needham. And while this trio play with more cohesion than the famously ragged original line-up, the dark power of old still resonates. The album's opening track, *Bring Out Your Dead*, is a bludgeoning attack. A slew of fast songs hark back to Venom's savage 1981 debut *Welcome To Hell*. And in the two most atmospheric numbers – the slow, grinding *Destroyer* and the Slayer-esque *I Dark Lord* – Lant plays the bogeyman to chilling effect.

Venom's legend was built on the unholy trinity of *Welcome To Hell*, *Black Metal* and *At War With Satan*. In Conrad Lant, now aged 56, the fire still burns.

Paul Elliott

The Bevis Frond

We're Your Friends, Man

FIRE

Perennially underrated English cult figure.

It would be a hard heart that didn't warm to the Bevis Frond's "twenty-somethingth" (his words) album from its opening verses, which propose that it's '*the sound of being left behind*'. It '*doesn't justify the time it took*', it continues, '*but I hope that you enjoy it*'.

It's difficult not to, as Nick Saloman's guitar-slinging psych-rock adventure moves into its fourth decade with a (somewhat overlong) 90 minutes of sensitive, surreal lyrics and wailing wig-outs which make J Mascis (a professed fan, as was Kurt Cobain) sound like Julian Bream. So rip-roaring is Salomon's soloing that you wonder why Crazy Horse don't get him in while Neil's on honeymoon or something. His voice a brittle echo of Robert Wyatt, he frolics through bruising barrages and more introspective spells, wryly mulling over ageing, acceptance and the universe, until climaxing with the 13-minute Hendrix maelstrom of *You're On Your Own*. You'll enjoy it.

Chris Roberts

Metal Church

Damned If You Do

NUCLEAR BLAST

Songs of praise.

This is album number 12 from these metal stalwarts, and if it underlines just one thing then it's that principal composer Kurdt Vanderhoof is an unstoppable riff machine. Leading very much from the front with vocalist Mike Howe confidently riding shotgun, the crunching power and invention on offer is refreshing and welcome, an affirmation that this dynamic duo are something of a classic thrash dream team.

When they're joyfully cracking heads on *Guillotine*, the title track, *The Black Things* and *By The Numbers*, or cranking out the delightfully vintage Accept-like *Monkey Finger*, things are just peachy: tuneful, hook-laden, gritty. *Revolution Underway* shows that they can turn up the melody when they really want to, but the real fun lies with songs like daft closer *The War Electric*, 10,000 volts of thrashing comedy menace – more than enough to make up for the bum note struck by *Out Of Balance* and its rather odd chorus.

Altogether this is a battle-scarred victory.

Essi Berelian

Ouzo Bazooka

Transporter STOLEN BOY

Israeli psychers hit their stride on third record.

Already spreading their reputation far beyond their native Tel Aviv, these exponents of 'Middle Eastern psych rock' will surely continue to make friends with *Transporter*, a more infectious record than its predecessor, 2016's more laid-back *Simoom*. Opening track *It's A Sin*, with its insistent two-chord riff and 'Ah-oooo' vocal hook, is sure to lodge itself, ear worm-like, in your head after a couple of listens.

The lacing of dizzy organ and synth sounds plus a cameo or two from evocative Middle Eastern instrumentation help firm up a musical identity that's increasingly distinctive, and it's offset by lyrics as intriguing as '*Dracula is drinking Coke, global warming is a joke*'. And while on *Killing Me* and *Trip Train* chief songwriter Uri Brauner Kinrot shows his talent for garage pop, on *Space Camel* there's a lithe R&B groove underpinning it all.

Johnny Sharp

Slim Chance

New Cross Road FISHPOOL

Lane rangers rove again.

Even 21 years after his death, Ronnie Lane's gypsy spirit continues to thrive in the capable hands of Slim Chance, the band he formed after leaving Faces in 1973 (further immortality to be clinched with 2019's consummate box set).

Having reconvened 15 years after Lane succumbed to multiple sclerosis in 1997, Slim Chance still revolves around accordionist Charlie Hart, guitarist Steve Stimpson and bassist Steve Bingham, who continued to uphold their late leader's legacy on 2012's *The Show Goes On*, 2015's *On The Move* and now this latest album, on which they're joined by keyboard player Geraint Watkins, guitarist Billy Nicholls and drummer Brendan O'Neill.

Amid rollicking new originals

ESTER SEGARRA/PRESS

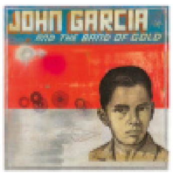
including *Flossie Lane* – in honour of Ronnie's former publican – sit affectionate renditions of Lane's *Chicken Wired*, live staple *Spiritual Babe*, Faces-days *Debris,* and the gorgeous *Annie* from 1977's *Rough Mix* project with Pete Townshend, whose *Squeezebox* also gets a revisit.

Kris Needs

John Garcia & The Band Of Gold

John Garcia & The Band Of Gold NAPALM

Sludge-filled sloppy seconds from former Kyuss frontman.



Riding his Kyuss legacy hard into the ground, John Garcia's latest outing (after a slew of promising solo work) sounds like desert rock's diminishing returns. Fêted, quite rightly, as the founder of the band who would most like to have been the 1970s Black Sabbath, he, along with Brant Bjork and Josh Homme (both doing sterling work elsewhere these days) brought contemporary stoner rock dancing out of the desert.

There's no denying the wonder at the heart of at least two of the Kyuss albums, but their smoky magic is missing in this hard record, which sounds like an approximation of a band trying to capture those splashy grooves. Garcia's voice is still a rasping wonder, and bringing in Chris Goss to add lustre to what sounds like a collection of songs captured in a garage is inspired, but it's not enough to lift these thrashy, stuttering jams (and occasionally ludicrous lyrics), which sound like the work of a much younger man staring at the sun-bleached horizon and wondering what tomorrow might yet bring.

Philip Wilding

Various

3 x 4 YEP ROC

The Bangles, The Three O'Clock, The Dream Syndicate and Rain Parade join forces.

The above four bands formed what was known as the Paisley Underground, a small but highly potent scene that originally grew up in Los Angeles at the dawn of the 1980s, held together by a love for the jangling guitars of The Byrds and the Velvet Underground, and (of course) for floral-paisley-shirts Sunshine pop, Nuggets and Pebbles garage rock. These were bands that didn't so much faithfully recreate the past as add another layer of interpretation to it.

The idea behind *3 x 4* – for each band to cover one song by each of the other three – came about at a benefit gig the four bands played at LA's Fonda Theatre to raise money for Education Through Music. They wanted to pay tribute to their Paisley roots, and this seemed like a great way to do it.

Rain Parade cover The Dream Syndicate's *When You Smile* and put an acoustic bridge on the chorus; the mighty Bangles bring in Indian percussion for Rain Parade's *Talking In My Sleep*, and so forth. Of particular note is The Dream Syndicate's fiery interpretation of The Bangles' *Hero Takes A Fall*.

A splendid loving indulgence.

Everett True

Within Temptation

Resist UNIVERSAL

Hitherto symphonic metallers discover that less can be more.

In comparison to peers Nightwish, who are writing 24-minute epics about evolutionary biology, Within Temptation's recent albums have seen them reign in their symphonic metal tendencies. By now the Dutch titans know that hard-hitting atmosphere and going straight for the jugular can yield equally emphatic results, and on *Resist*, their seventh album, they sound tighter and more purposeful than ever. Sharon den Adel's vocals are flawless and distinctive, carrying huge, anthemic choruses on tracks like *Endless War* and *Trophy Hunter*. And while *The Reckoning* and *Raise Your Banner* eschew orchestral opulence for immediacy, both are reassuringly awash with dark energy.

Resist is more an evolution than a revolution in the band's sound, which tightens up and augments everything that was great about 2014's *Hydra*. It's also their most assured and heavy album to date.

Dannii Leivers

A Pale Horse Named Death

When The World Becomes Undone SPV/LONG BRANCH

Type O Negative alumni revive past glories.

A Pale Horse Named Death have more right than most to fill the vast, Type O Negative-shaped hole left after the death of frontman Peter Steele in 2010. They feature not one but two former members of the goth-metal figureheads: original drummer Sal Abruscato (on vocals here) and his own replacement, Johnny Kelly.

The New York band's third album offers a reminder of what was and what could have been. They've nailed the funeral cortege-paced sludge that was the calling card of the duo's old band, even if the latter's tar-black humour and cathedral sweep are missing, while Abruscato's bleak intonations can never match Steele's hell's-own-crooner approach. Still, anyone who misses Type O Negative won't find it difficult to clear a dark corner of their heart for this record.

Dave Everley

Amigo The Devil

Everything Is Fine REGIME INC.

The album Mumford and Sons would make if they suffered a deep, personal tragedy.

This album's *If I'm Crazy* portrays the often overlooked, torturous side of love, a pain clearly portrayed through the devil's voice. *First Day Of The End of My Life* exhibits but one example of the astonishingly dark lyrics: '*I took years to find a meaningful and peaceful place to die*,' while *Preacher Feature* combines Leonard Cohen's poetry with Johnny Cash's southern twang, all with a decent portion of lost hope.

The acoustic, southern gothic style doesn't showcase Brad Wilk's drumming; Ross Robinson's excellent production emphasises the ardent misery of the entire record. If you've lost your keys or missed the bus, don't listen to it. If everything you love is suddenly consumed by blazing fire and destruction, then be my guest.

Phoebe Flys

ROUND-UP: PROG

By Jo Kendall

Hedvig Mollestad Trio: from channelling the Beastie Boys to going metallically Zep and jazz Sabbath.

JULIA MARIE NAGLESTAD/PRESS

Hedvig Mollestad Trio

Smells Funny RUNE GRAMMOFON

Firstly, this is a shout-out to Norwegian record label Rune Grammofon, who just turned 20 and have been a home to myriad excellent left-of-the-dial acts in jazz and rock such as Bushman's Revenge, Elephant9, Shining, Susanna, Jenny Hval and this writer's beloved Motorpsycho. Award-winning guitarist Hedvig Mollestad appeared on their roster in 2011 with the superb *Shoot!*, stamping her stiletto-heeled way through jazz-prog expositions that owed as much to Guns N' Roses and Melvins as to Johns McLaughlin and Coltrane.

Smells Funny, her trio's sixth album, doesn't hold back (except on the dreamy *Jurasek*). Opener *Beastie, Beastie* channels *Sabotage* by the Beastie Boys, before things go metallically Zep for *First Thing To Pop Is An Eye* and jazz Sabbath on *Bewitched, Dwarfed And Defeathered*, with bassist Ellen Brekken burning frets and drummer Ivar Loe Bjornstad almost levitating his kit. *Lucidness* is the incendiary cherry on this Kvæfjordkake – if you want to know what Hendrix might have done beyond 27, listen to this.

Lapis Lazuli

Brain LAPISLAZULI.BANDCAMP.COM

Now trimmed to a four-piece, there's still oodles of complexity to this fifth release from Canterbury proggers Lapis Lazuli. Precise cyclical figures, jazzy swing, dubby lolloping… it's an Ozric Tentacles kind of party, with King Crimson and Brand X gatecrashing midway. It's got plenty of clever chops, but presented airily and organically – as they state on track one, *Low Key*.

Pavlov's Dog

Prodigal Dreamer ROCKVILLE

It's 43 years since *Pampered Menial*, and today there's less electric bleat in frontman David Surkamp's voice, which suits *Prodigal Dreamer*'s hymnal style. Familiar motifs – Abbie Steiling's fluid violin and the theatricality of Surkamp in *The Winds Wild Early* – show the six-piece are wearing well, even if this soulful slice of folk-prog Americana could signal a winding down.

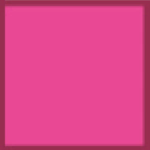
The Hare And Hoofe

The Terror Of Melton THEHAREANDHOOFE.BANDCAMP.COM

Want a mash-up of King Gizzard and Sparks? Then look no further than this London sextet. Tumbling on to the scene with capes, flutes and platform boots, this eight-part suite isn't all the full-on glam-psych madness of tracks such as *Chromium Dioxide And The Crazy Data*, there's also sweeter scents, such as *Cold Blows The Whistle Lonely Nights*. Exciting stuff.

Pallas

Courage And Other Songs Of War And Peace SELF- RELEASED



Many believe that prog has no soul or emotion. No one told Graeme Murray and co, who present this atmospheric, symphonic free-to-download album based on The Great War with empathy and class, very much in line with Pink Floyd's *Final Cut*. There's real feeling here, especially on *XXV Suite*. An inspired tribute.

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THE HARD STUFF
REISSUES

Slipknot
All Hope Is Gone
10th Anniversary Edition ROADRUNNER

The masked maniacs' difficult fourth album revisited. Maybe it's not so 'difficult' after all?

'*You'll never censor me, you'd better cherish me!*' bellows Corey Taylor in *Butcher's Hook*, neatly summing up a large part of Slipknot's appeal midway through the band's fourth studio album. *All Hope Is Gone* was *always* going to be a tough record for the Iowan nine-piece: the previous three had all been insanely successful, not least for a band that sounded permanently but thrillingly on the edge of disintegration. 2004's *Vol.3: The Subliminal Verses*, in particular, had received near-universal acclaim, as the band's trademark blend of brutality and big tunes embraced a broader spectrum of dynamics and a greater sense of experimental daring. Upon its release, *All Hope Is Gone* went down just fine with hardcore fans but a consensus seems to have since developed that the last Slipknot album to feature once-talismanic drummer Joey Jordison is, on balance, their weakest.

In truth, this re-mastered, tenth anniversary edition confirms that the hardcore fans were right all along. Yes, *All Hope Is Gone* is a more fractured and restless affair than the fluid and fiery *Vol.3*, but its many peaks are among the finest songs that Slipknot have written. Radio-friendly anthems like *Snuff* and the woozily melodic *Dead Memories* affirmed the band's maturity as songwriters, but even more typical fare like *Psychosocial* and the Meshuggah-tinged *Butcher's Hook* exhibited a collective desire to do something different with a proven formula. Sweet Christ, it's ridiculously heavy, too: opener *Gematria (The Killing Name)* is a popping, hissing tsunami of churning death metal riffs, with Taylor in full bug-eyed mode; *Vendetta* sounds like Bay Area thrash fed through Al Jourgensen's cosmic meat-grinder; *This Cold Black* is as unsettlingly bereft of light as its title suggests. Meanwhile, the blistering title track is one of Slipknot's most underrated anthems, its bleak message – in hindsight – eerily prescient. And if anyone thought Slipknot were obsessed with courting radio back in 2008, seven-minute sludge deluge *Gehenna* provides a noisy, grotesque and deeply discomfiting rebuttal. Newly paired with a hair-raising live show from Madison Square Gardens in 2009 (and let's not forget how remarkable it is that a band that sounds like *that* can fill a venue that size in the first place) and with retooled, suitably retina-wrenching artwork courtesy of that terrifying Clown fella, *All Hope Is Gone* is absolutely no runt of the litter.

Dom Lawson

Saigon Kick
Reissues ROCK CANDY

Mad professors of psychedelic metal ride again.

Best remembered for their surprise MTV-bothering hit *Love Is On The Way*, an Extreme-style ballad from second album *The Lizard*, in reality Florida's Saigon Kick were experimenters extraordinaire, their eclectic Jane's Addiction-meets-Alice In Chains via King's X vibe demonstrating a restless appetite for exploration. Now with bonus tracks *Hey Hey Hey* and an acoustic *Colors* – far superior to the heavier version – their self-titled 1990 Atlantic debut (**7/10**) was a riot of off-the-wall ideas and a perfect springboard into their finest hour, 1992's *The Lizard* (**7/10**), now augmented by a tidy cover of *Dear Prudence*), which went gold on the back of *Love Is On The Way*. Unfortunately success didn't ensure stability and the creation of 1993's even more fiercely experimental *Water* (**7/10**) was beset with infighting, guitarist Jason Bieler taking over vocals from departing Matt Kramer. Now including completely dispensable bonus track *Not Enough*, a load of industrial-style pissing about to Megadeth's *Symphony of Destruction* riff, *Water* was Saigon Kick totally off the leash, Beatlesy vocal harmonies and whimsical pop rubbing shoulders with tribal drums and axe-hero riffing. A joyful sonic adventure, it didn't sell at all and Saigon Kick were dropped, basically for being far too clever for their own good.

Essi Berelian

Procol Harum
Reissues ESOTERIC

Two very different records from the 70s Procol catalogue.

Formed in 1967 from the ashes of Southend beat combo The Paramounts, Procol Harum laid out several of the ground rules for prog with *A White Shade Of Pale* – classical pretensions, opaque lyrics, a disregard for brevity – and immediately became an extraordinary band. Songs like *Homburg*, *Conquistador* and *A Salty Dog*, when sung in Gary Brooker's superb white soul, gave added meaning to Keith Reid's melancholy lyrics. And the band's combination of grandiosity and drama worked brilliantly when they were paired with an orchestra for *Live in Concert With The Edmonton Symphony Orchestra* (**9/10**); while others, most notably Deep Purple, had tried the same thing, the mixture of Procol's doomed, cavernous songs and the power and darkness of the orchestra is one of the finest collaborations in rock.

Procol's Ninth (**6/10**) is an entirely different kettle of kippers. Recorded very much as a reaction to 1973's *Grand Hotel*, it deliberately moved itself far away from that album's ornate, and orchestral sound, and – as other, newer bands were doing at the time (i.e. 1975) – looked to an earlier time in rock's history for inspiration. With the great R&B songwriters Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller as producers, *Procol's Ninth* was as much a Paramounts album as it was a Procol Harum one, even featuring covers of *Eight Days A Week* and the producers' own *I Keep Forgetting*. Elswehere, the music was sparse, but heavy, and while classic songs were on the whole absent, it was a worthwhile diversion.

David Quantick

Angels & Airwaves
Reissues SRC VINYL

Grown-up vinyl reissues from Blink-182 spin-off band.

Even pop-punk frat boys can be struck down by a severe case of The Seriousness. For Blink-182's Tom DeLonge that point came in the mid-00s, when he opted to ditch the band he co-founded and their fart'n'boob fixation, and reposition himself as the emo Bono.

In fairness, he came close to – ahem – pulling it off on *We Don't Need To Whisper* (**7/10**), the debut album from his new group, Angels & Airwaves. The circling guitars of *The Adventure* and *It Hurts* spiral upwards, U2 style, though the ever-present Hanna-Barbera twang in DeLonge's voice undercuts the heart-on-sleeve emoting. Still, it was unexpectedly affecting.

The shock of the new had disappated by the time of the follow-up, 2007's brighter *I-Empire* (**6/10**), further undercut by DeLonge broadening his palette and losing the focus that had initially fuelled him. It wasn't bad, but it

could have been one of a hundred bands around at the same time.

A decade-plus later, both albums are gettng a lavish vinyl reissue: lacquered, multi-colour discs (black and purple for the debut, shades of gold for the follow-up) and various expensive-feeling inserts accompanying both. It's a properly adult experience, though not the kind you'd expect from a bloke who used to be in Blink-182.

Dave Everley

Man

Evolution PURPLE PYRAMID

Pride of Man (in a nice six-CD boxset).

Witnessing Man as they found their feet after psychedelic birth-pangs in 1968 felt like the nearest this country had to the fabled jam bands playing California's ballrooms. Led by Micky Jones' liquid guitar flights and brilliant drummer Terry Williams, their *Christmas At The Patti* ten-inch (a live album released in 1972) almost defined the whole freewheeling era.

Man's revolving-door procession of personnel changes created one of rock's most-branched family trees before they split in the late 70s,. They re-formed in '83 and made their first studio album in 16 years, 1992's *The Twang Dynasty* (their tenth studio LP), another feisty twin-guitar-led feast complete with returning founder member Deke Leonard.

The Twang Dynasty appears as disc two in this somewhat confusing six-CD set which also presents *Endangered Species* (2000), *Undrugged* (2002), *Diamonds And Coal* (2006) and, most excitingly, two discs of *Live At The Keystone*, capturing Man playing Berkeley, California in 1976, joined by band hero John Cipollina of Quicksilver Messenger Service (released privately in 2005 through the late Jones's website). It's a crazed scorcher, tracks like *C'mon* and *Bananas* providing a sizzling document of Man's eternal latent magic.

Maybe the content is rather random, but this'll do nicely until this much-loved band gets its well-deserved Wishbone Ash-style motherlode.

Kris Needs

Stereolab

Reissues TOO PURE/BEGGARS ARKIVE

Wormhole pop records reissued just as the world catches up.

In the early 90s, when electro music was all about starting futuristic rave fires, Stereolab dared to dream in oscillations. Inspired by the surrealist and situationist culture and disguising a political passion beneath their boffin deadpan, Laetitia Sadier and Tim Gane defied the techno revolution to hark backwards to krautrock and its lab-coated origins, draping Gallic 60s pop melodies over the sort of synth drones that people with clipboards used to get out of computers the size of buses in 1962. The result is arguably the first convincing example of electronic retro-futurism, and the true root of modern laptop-tronica.

Reissuing 1992's debut album *Peng!* (**9/10**) exposes indier origins than you might expect. This enthralling art-pop record is a Radiophonic twist on the drone rock of The Velvet Underground, Spacemen 3 and early Spiritualized, the warped screes of My Bloody Valentine and the C86 jangles of The Wedding Present. Buried beneath *K-Stars* and *Surrealchemist*, though, is electronica's future; the glitchy clicks and buzzes that are as ubiquitous in leftfield pop today as facial tattoos.

The 1993 mini-LP *Space Age Bachelor Pad Music* (**8/10**) focussed the aesthetic further, creating a cult sensation with its harmony-drenched clash of hypnotic sci-fi easy listening, android rock'n'roll and cranky tonal experiments. Radiohead probably got a copy stuck in the tour bus's CD player; whatever its time is, it still sounds ahead of it.

Mark Beaumont

Various

Confessin' The Blues

UNIVERSAL

Rolling Stones turn blue.

Having fortuitously recovered their blues mojo on their last album, after finding that the prospect of recording anything else was beyond them, the Rolling Stones have now put their name to a blues compilation of the songs that have topped and tailed their illustrious career.

The title track (by Jay McShann and Walter Brown) was featured on the Stones' 1964 EP *Five By Five* recorded at Chess Studios on their first American trip, and the collection opens with the Muddy Waters song that inspired their name. The originals of the songs that peppered the first two Stones albums are here – including Bo Diddley's *Mona*, Slim Harpo's *I'm A King Bee* and Dale Hawkins' *Suzie Q*, revealing just how faithfully they covered them, right down to the vocal asides and note-for-note guitar solos.

They've also rounded up the original version of every track on the *Blue And Lonesome* album – on which the Stones brought their own brand of authenticity to bear on four Little Walter songs, a couple by Howlin' Wolf and varied gems from Lightnin' Slim, Little Johnny Taylor and Magic Sam, among others.

Ronnie Wood has chipped in with the cover and the Willie Dixon Blues Heaven Foundation will get a cut from every copy sold. So ker-ching to them.

Hugh Fielder

Europe

Out Of This World ROCK CANDY

After the mega-hit, a hard-won victory.

It was an extraordinary song that lifted a previously little known Swedish rock band to the dizzying heights of global stardom in 1986. *The Final Countdown*, written by Europe's singer Joey Tempest, combined the galloping thunder of Iron Maiden's *Run To The Hills*, the sci-fi fantasy of David Bowie's *Space Oddity*, and – Tempest's master stroke – a blaring keyboard riff with the pomposity of ELP's *Fanfare For The Common Man* and the pop bounce of Van Halen's *Jump*.

The Final Countdown powered to No.1 in twenty-five countries, and from the album of the same name there were two other big hits – the anthem *Rock The Night* and power ballad *Carrie*. But with success came trouble. By the end of '86, guitarist and founding member John Norum had quit, grumbling that Europe had become "a teeny-bopper bubblegum band".

The Final Countdown was a hard act to follow. Harder still with Norum gone. And yet from a period of turmoil and huge pressure the band emerged in 1988 with a brilliant album, boldly titled *Out Of This World*. With new guitarist Kee Marcello, formerly of glam-rockers Easy Action, fitting in seamlessly, Norum wasn't missed. And the strength of this album, full of high-class heavy rock, made nonsense of Norum's parting shot.

Superstitious, the opening track and lead single, rocked in the grand manner of vintage Deep Purple, with parping keyboards adding a little echo of *The Final Countdown* to an epic chorus, and a beautiful, melodic solo from Marcello reminiscent of Michael Schenker at his peak. *Open Your Heart*, first featured on the band's 1984 album *Wings Of Tomorrow*, was equal to anything on Whitesnake's *1987*. And in *Ready Or Not* there was one of the great feel-good rock songs of the 80s.

The album was a sizable hit, selling a million copies in America, but when the follow-up, *Prisoners In Paradise*, was released in 1991, Europe, like so many of their peers, got lost in the great grunge gold rush. After the band split in 1992, it was eleven years before they returned, with Norum reinstated.

In recent times, Europe have made some great records in the heavier style of their earliest work. *The Final Countdown* will always be their most famous album, but *Out Of This World* is arguably their best.

Paul Elliott

GETTY

Buzzcocks

Reissues DOMINO

Another chance to fall in love with albums you should have first time around.

They were among the first wave of punk bands, but there was more to Buzzcocks than just boredom and power chords. Following the departure of frontman Howard Devoto after just a few months to form Magazine, the most sardonic band of all time, Pete Shelley brought to Buzzcocks a style of songwriting that was both aggressive and wistful. With Steve Diggle providing a boxer's attitude to the guitar, Buzzcocks became punk's most realist band, writing songs about love and disappointment, identity and romance, instead of pretending to care about the government.

Their debut album, *Another Music In A Different Kitchen* (**10/10**), is one of the great mission statements. The sleeve looks like the contents – metallic silver with orange flashes – and the contents sound like nothing else; songs that race past in a blur not matched until Hüsker Dü got going, riffs that reference both T.Rex and the Stooges, motoric beats, and the most amazing melodies. Produced by Martin Rushent to sound both speedy and shiny, *Another Music* still sounds brilliant, from the opening snatch of an upgraded *Boredom* to the astonishing *Moving Away From The Pulsebeat*.

The stream of extraordinary singles Buzzcocks were releasing enabled them to get into the charts, and *Ever Fallen In Love (With Someone You Shouldn't Have)*, their biggest hit, is one of the greatest songs of all time, with guitars shoving each other forward and Shelley's most defining and anthemic chorus. It's survived cover versions and adverts and it's still wonderful.

It's also just one of the excellent parts of the curate's egg that is *Love Bites* (**8/10**), an album that still feels like a grab-bag of instrumentals, hastily written songs and the odd classic. *Love Bites* is Buzzcocks's big pop album, put together at the height of their near-fame, and it shows. The best songs are as good as anything the band recorded: *Nostalgia* (recorded by Penetration, trivia fans), *Sixteen Again* and the concert closer *E.S.P.* And while some, like *Just Lust* (a B-side on an album? Punk heresy) and *Operator's Manual* are merely good, the oddities, such as Diggle's *Love Is Lies* and the band-written instrumental *Late For The Train*, have worn well.

After Buzzcocks' second album the cracks began to show, in singles like the superbly cynical *Everybody's Happy Nowadays*, there was a brilliant third album that deserved to sell millions but didn't, and the band's first era ended with a stubbly, acid-fuelled singles trilogy. But these albums, still excellent, still influential and still entertaining, are essential.

David Quantick

Iron Maiden

Reissues PARLOPHONE

First four albums from heavy metal juggernaut.

For all punk's much-vaunted uncompromising stance, when Iron Maiden took to the *Top Of The Pops* stage in February 1980 to promote their debut single *Running Free* they were, at their own insistence, the first band to play live on the show since The Who in '73.

For Maiden, actions have always spoken louder than swaggering PR hyperbole. Although never en vogue, the Irons' ingenuous passion's always been in fashion, and as a consequence time has seen them emerge – first domestically, then universally – as the people's rock band of choice.

These largely frill-free digipack CD reissues (the first quartet of four, in a series that over the next six months will ultimately constitute their entire 16-album back catalogue – as remastered for iTunes in 2015) cover their rough, raw'n'ready Di'Anno-fronted emergence – *Iron Maiden, Killers* (both **7/10**) – and the explosive and defining halcyon days of Dickinson: *The Number Of The Beast* (complete with Eddie The Ed figurine and Devil patch, **9/10**) and *Piece Of Mind* (**8/10**). Functional, honest, designed for excellent performance at maximum volume, they're very metal and very, very Maiden.

Ian Fortnam

Sammy Hagar

Danger Zone ROCK CANDY

Ex-Montrose, pre-Van Halen singer seeks solo success.

It's odd to think of Sammy Hagar as a cult-hero wannabe, but in 1980, when this album was first released, that's all he was.

After three often pedestrian studio albums, it was only on 1978's high-energy live *All Night Long* (aka *Loud And Clear*) that he'd truly rekindled memories of his seminal two-album run fronting Montrose. Next up, *Street Machine* was promising. So come this, album number five, we hoped he'd continue the upward curve and finally replicate his in-concert delivery.

But no. Instead we got the traditionally proficient mixture of hard rock (*20th Century Man* and most of the vinyl side one), along with more commercial tunes seeking exposure via AM radio (side two); *The Iceman, Bad Reputation, Heartbeat* and particularly *Run For Your Life* (an unlikely cover of a then year-old song by UK band Runner) might all have been hits if original label Capitol had tried hard enough.

Without any additional tracks, and with 10 songs running just 34 minutes, the main 'bonus' attraction here is Journey's Neal Schon on lead guitar on opener *Love Or Money*, plus his band's frontman Steve Perry singing backing vocals on that and three others. So, as good as *Danger Zone*, but no better.

Neil Jeffries

Stillwater

Reissues CHERRY RED

Southern rockers' first two.

The original Stillwater (not the one in the film *Almost Famous*) came from Macon, Georgia and made only a brief mark on 70s southern rock over two albums, but these remastered versions show they deserved more.

Their best-known moment is the US Top-50 single *Mind Bender*, a slow, bluesy tale of finding a talking guitar in a junk shop, from their self-titled 1977 debut (**8/10**). Even their use of a Frampton-style talk box still sounds like a neat trick, even when half of all chart music in the current era seems to use the increasingly insufferable effect.

Elsewhere, they showcase impressive versatility: the defiant boogie anthem *Rock'n'roll Loser* is punchier in this remastered form. And if they don't achieve the heaviness of some of their southern contemporaries, this was always a band who were as much about the roll as the rock. Two versions (one live) of the Santana-ish *Out On A Limb* exemplifies that, along with some dazzling three-guitars-and-keyboard excursions.

Ill-fated second album *I Reserve The Right* (**6/10**) suffers from a few too many AOR tendencies, but closer *Ain't We A Pair* relights their fire, with Bonnie Bramlett lending a vocal counterpoint.

Johnny Sharp

Tygers Of Pan Tang

Hellbound Spellbound '81

MIGHTY MUSIC

NWOBHM heroes live at their early peak.

There was a touch of glamour about the young Tygers Of Pan Tang – in that wonderfully exotic name, lifted from one of Michael

CHRIS GABRIN/PRESS

Moorcock's sword-and-sorcery tales, and in the swagger of John Sykes, the pretty-boy guitarist who later starred in Thin Lizzy and Whitesnake. But it was the raw energy they had, a grittiness typical of their native North East, that made the Tygers a key band in the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal. As *Hellbound Spellbound '81* testifies, they were a true Northern powerhouse.

Recorded in 1981 but never before released, this live set was recorded at a Nottingham gig by Chris Tsangarides, producer of the band's first two albums, and recently remixed by Soren Andersen. It features the definitive Tygers line-up, with Welshman John Deverill in place of original singer Jess Cox, pounding out heavy-duty songs including *Hellbound, Euthanasia* and *Gangland*. Strangely omitted from this performance are *Don't Touch Me There* and *Suzie Smiled*, defining songs for the band and the era. But what comes across with this album is the power and intensity of a young band in their prime, and something more: a sense of the heat in that packed room, and the aroma of sweat and beer. Heady times.

Paul Elliott

The Fallen Leaves

Punk Rock For Gentlemen

PARLIAMENT

Immaculate stuff from garage rockers featuring ex-Subway Sect members.

No one would accuse the Fallen Leaves of blazing a futuristic 21st-century trail for rock, but if traditionalism is a virtue then they are the epitome of it.

There's a neat, natty, just-so-ness about this collection, recorded on vintage equipment for further authentic effect. Songs like *Go Now* and *Sylvie Says* are more than mere copyism of 60s originals. Rather, they are the work of master rock tailors, expertly cut, with the reliable smartness of a proper Harrington jacket; no knock-offs here. When they do a keyboard solo it's not with a garish flourish, but a single-note affair. Co-songwriters Rob Green and former Subway Sect man Rob Symons draw on decades of expertise, opting for a combination of energy and elegance in the main, as befits the album title.

It isn't possible to magic back the likes of The Kinks or The Pretty Things, but the very next best thing to that is to catch The Fallen Leaves in some small, intimate club and watch them up-close, making a perfect 1964 of things, with redolences of Dansettes and suede boots and a rare, classic precision.

David Stubbs

Family

Family At The BBC MADFISH

Patchy, not-so-live 'live' tracks.

The 96 tracks on this seven-CD box set were recorded for/by the BBC between '67 and '73 for various programs including *Colour Me Pop* and John Peel's *Top Gear*. Among them are 20 previously unreleased, some real gems, lots of workmanlike and the odd real stinker. Arranged chronologically, with several versions of some songs, they tell the story of a great, trailblazing British progressive band of the late 60s morphing into OK rock also-rans.

For many fans much of the gold here will be the earlier recordings, of songs (*See Through Windows, Peace Of Mind, Drowned In Wine*) from their stand-out first three albums, and a couple (*Between Blue And Me, Spanish Tide*) from the return-to-form *Fearless*. Mind you, many of the tracks are far from live, with swathes of tracking from the album versions – some *are* the album version. But then that kind of shenanigans was the norm for Beeb sessions. Other tracks clearly don't employ that approach, such as the May '69 version of *The Weaver's Answer*, in which Charlie Whitney's guitar solo sounds like he's playing a different song.

Also included is a nine-track DVD of *Whistle Test, Top Of The Pops* and other TV appearances, a hardback book with an essay, rare photos, poster, recording and broadcast dates and personnel (Roger Chapman on sax throughout? I don't think so).

Paul Henderson

The Fall

58 Golden Greats CHERRY RED

Recalcitrant anti-career made coherent by expanded 'best of'.

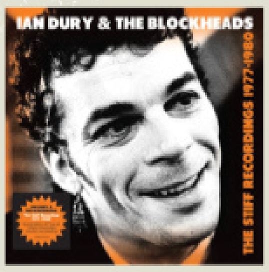
"Remember Woodstock," Mark E Smith remarks during 2013's *The Remainderer*, in a phlegmy-voiced retort to the very notion of nostalgia.

This three-disc update of the landmark Fall compilation *50,000 Fall Fans Can't Be Wrong* accordingly wastes little time with sentiment a year on from Smith's death, but it does make clear sense of a rambling, uninviting catalogue.

Disc One builds a prototype which owes more to William Burroughs, Beefheart and Salford than to London or New York punk. The paranoid inertia of the blocked author in *How I Wrote 'Elastic Man'* shows Smith's early talent for absurd fictional sketches, as its askew groove leads into the nerve-jangling amphetamine clatter of *Totally Wired*. Middle years of minor commercial success climax with 1992's *Free Range*, with Smith gleefully prophesying bad news over fuzzed-up, widescreen vistas like a grunge-era Moses.

Disc Three finds him physically shrunken by his excesses, and his writing reduced to hermetic, hilarious mutters ('*I had to wank off the cat to feed the fucking dog*'), while the latter-day Fall rumble on regardless. In these last years Smith became a vaguely reprehensible, almost indestructible embodiment of primal, personal rock'n'roll.

Nick Hasted



Ian Dury & The Blockheads

The Stiff Recordings 1977-1980 DEMON

Four-LP vinyl box set covers Lord Upminster's Stiff Records era.

Stumbling obliviously into a dual role which seemed as tailor-made as it was unlikely, Ian Dury – a unifying, unavoidable presence between the summers of '77 and '79 – was UK punk's elder statesman-cum-poet laureate. Yet this silver-tongued bus driver's son suffered a fall that was just as spectacular, sudden and unexplained as his phenomenal rise. Incredibly, it all occurred on the back of three singles and a single album, on a singular label, Dave Robinson and Jake Riviera's Stiff.

Dury had been kicking around as the frontman of pub-rock oddities Kilburn And The High Roads since '71, but upon going solo he engaged the original Pink Floyd management team, formed a songwriting partnership with guitarist Chas Jankel (with whom he formed The Blockheads), and by blending music-hall with rock, reggae and a colourful vocabulary he clumsily, but effectively, seduced a nation via a never more lively gig scene.

Dury's ascent was dizzying, from pot-boiling 1976's debut single *Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll*, through 1977's faultless, genre-blending Top-Five *New Boots & Panties!!!* album, a veritable feast of delights featuring the barroom couplets of *Billericay Dickie* (who had a love affair with Nina who'd '*never been more obscener*') alongside *Wake Up And Make Love With Me* (a sensitive examination of having a '*proper wriggle in the naughty naked nude*'), to *Hit Me With Your Rhythm Stick* topping the chart in January '79 and *Reasons To Be Cheerful, Part 3* hitting No.3 the following July. Then? The decline. *Do It Yourself* had the previous two singles going for it, but not a whole lot else. *Laughter* followed, but not all the way to the bank. After the critically mauled album stiffed at No.48, Stiff – and The Blockheads – limped away.

All the Stiff stuff's here (plus a fourth disc of priceless single As and Bs, not least, *S&D&R&R*'s magnificent *Razzle In My Pocket* flip), all sounding perfectly pukka, all nicely translucently vinyl-ed. While Ian Dury's bankable days were brief, his status as a national treasure remains enduring and richly deserved

Ian Fortnam

BARRY PLUMMER/PRESS

THE HARD STUFF BUYER'S GUIDE

Kscope's roots: early Porcupine Tree.

Kscope

The post-progressive label have been putting out quality records for 10 years now, but which are the best that should you own?

The roots of this leading-light label in contemporary progressive music actually go back to the late 90s. Part of Snapper Music, and sister-label to the more metal-geared Peaceville, Kscope was initially the sole preserve of Steven Wilson and his much-loved brainchild Porcupine Tree. Back then, in 1999, the idea was to have an arm of the Snapper group that focused on the kind of 21st-century prog and alt.rock advocated by Wilson. It quickly became apparent that there were others like him. Fellow innovative British rock bands The Pineapple Thief and Anathema quickly joined the label, followed by others from an increasingly broad range of countries and schools of progressive thought.

To that end, Kscope's catalogue now covers rock, electronica, alternative jazz, metal and folk, along with solo albums and reissues from A-listers including Ian Anderson and Steve Hogarth (we've deliberately left those out of this round-up, as they really merit guides of their own). It has essentially created a whole genre; so many more artists have emerged under the 'post-progressive' banner since its inception. And with our sister title *Prog* playing a big part in its ongoing development, it's become a revered haven for quality progressive music – proof, for those who need it, that prog is much more than something weird that happened in Canterbury in the late 60s and early 70s.

It's not all gold, though. Kscope can feel like a very niched, *slightly* chin-strokey environment, especially at the more electronic end of their roster, and some records simply err on the drifty, opaque side, irrespective of your personal taste. But the label is also home to a rich lineage of boundary-pushing rock; the sort of albums that subvert clichés in the most inviting way possible. If you're bored by a lot of contemporary rock, and long for something new that's both interesting and readily likeable, this is a good place to turn to.

A couple of notes: yes, Steven Wilson is all over this guide, essentially because he's been very busy and played with a number of prime-cut artists signed to the label. Besides, he's basically the reason the label exists, so it seems fair enough. Beyond that we've capped it at one album per artist, and made our choices with the rock listener in mind.

Polly Glass

Essential Classics

Anathema

The Optimist *2017*

Anathema's back catalogue is filled with highly original progressive music (once you get past their early doom days, that is), so the fact that this tops it all is saying something. With their eleventh album they expertly shaped years of innovation, experimentation, songwriting and emotional upheaval into 11 exquisite tracks. Using a central character (The Optimist) provided Danny and Vincent Cavanagh with a new output through which to channel their own experience (stemming from a tough upbringing in Liverpool), combined with a slick, effortless mix of organic and electronic elements and, crucially, amazing tunes.

Steven Wilson

The Raven That Refused To Sing (And Other Stories) *2013*

A conceptual love letter to the founding fathers of prog (lyrically inspired by ghost stories by the likes of Edgar Allan Poe), this was Steven Wilson's first record as an all-out composer, and saw him writing specifically for his newly assembled virtuoso band.

A flowing set of immaculately composed vignettes, it's thematically compelling and musically stunning throughout, with the edgy dynamism of *Luminol*, the gut-wrenching *Drive Home* and the dark and twisting *The Watchmaker*. It's one of the strongest records he's done, and features his best vocal performance to date in the hauntingly beautiful title track.

Superior Reputation cementing

The Pineapple Thief
Dissolution *2018*

Another career-topping latest album, this time from Bruce Soord's brainchild. Beefed up in terms of weight and virtuosic excitement by new drummer Gavin Harrison, *Dissolution* brings together classic-Floyd-era prog rock, 80s/90s grunge, Radiohead and other influences that have shaped Soord over the years. It's the band's most impactful combination of texture, gnarly progressive oomph and strong tunes yet, peaking on the likes of *Try As I Might* and *Far Below*.

TPT never quite hit the heights of some of the other artists on the label, but this album puts them comfortably in the big league.

North Atlantic Oscillation
The Third Day *2014*

If you buy one predominantly electronic record from the Kscope catalogue (and they have serious form in this field), make it this one. Look up the term 'soaring' in the dictionary, and this album will be one of the first things you find.

Mixing shoegaze, infectious pop tunes and ambient layers, songs swell through different moods with ease. One to order on vinyl, for the cool artwork *and* the immersive blend of velvety warmth and crisp electronica. *The Third Day* is a beautiful, original record, by perhaps the most soulful band to be named after a weather phenomenon.

Steven Wilson
Grace For Drowning *2011*

Often over shadowed in Wilson's catalogue by the iconic likes of *The Raven*, his second solo album is actually stuffed full of resounding winners. All that gnarly jazz, prog and industrial noise he'd been quietly absorbing for years is stirred into the compelling, cohesive frameworks of *Index, Rader II, Remainder The Black Dog* and more. And while his latest solo record *To The Bone* might have been said to be his most poppy venture, it's on *Grace For Drowning*, in the exquisitely melodic heartbreak of *Deform To Form A Star* and *Postcard*, that we see the seeds of Wilson's pop prowess really start to flourish.

Gazpacho
Tick Tock *2009*

Weird shit be happening in proggiest Norway, but in the hands of Gazpacho (so-called because it's "the bastard of soups", apparently) it's melodious weird shit. There's a sparkling sense of macabre storytelling in records like this.

A concept album based on the book *Wind, Sand And Stars* by Antoine Di Saint-Exupery, *Tick Tock* is an enigmatic hybrid of gnarly rock, alternative indie and avant pop. It's predecessor *Night* was a bit more immediate, but this is still very more-ish, and the depth and intrigue makes it the more rewarding listen. Check out *Desert Flight* and the title track (part 1) for starters.

Good Worth exploring

Iamthemorning
Ocean Sounds *2018*

Comprising songs from their three Kscope albums, and accompanied by a studio film shot in a remote spot in Norway, *Ocean Sounds* is the perfect introduction to this slightly strange but commanding Russian duo. Singer Marjana Semkina brings to mind Kate Bush at her most other-worldly, while virtuoso pianist Gleb Kolyadin stirs classical dexterity into lush soundscapes. Joined on the record by the live band that has served them so well over the past year or two, they show off these songs to their best advantage. Highlights include the delicate, brooding *Inside* and *Touching II* and the swelling chamber prog of *Libretto Horror*.

Porcupine Tree
Lightbulb Sun *2000*

Yes, it pre-dates Kscope's official launch, but it's the first record released on a KScope imprint so we figured it was okay to include it. Knowing what epic *tours de force* Steven Wilson went on to create (both with Porcupine Tree and as a solo artist) gives *Lightbulb Sun* an endearing naivety, lyrically and musically. There's an experimental spirit here, combined with a prevailing focus on solid tunes and guitar hooks, that set the tone for subsequent KScope records.

Wilson has since become a better singer, guitarist and storyteller, but with this record's mesh of melodic angst, atmospheric swathes and grittier rock jabs, that scarcely matters.

Blackfield
Blackfield *2004*

Another early Kscope release (and later reissued by the label in deluxe form), this time from the musical lovechild of Steven Wilson and Israeli star Aviv Geffen. This, Blackfield's intriguing debut album, is still their best, we think.

It begins with prettily fragile acoustic guitars that smash suddenly into a moody, heavy guitar stomp (*Open Mind*), before traversing elegantly through alt.pop catchiness (e.g. the title track), melancholy synths (*Glow*) and marriages of Geffen and Wilson's imperfect, heartfelt vocals. The sound of two innnovative but tune-focused composer minds flexing their creative muscles in harmony.

Avoid

No-Sound
The Northern Religion Of Things *2011*

Not so much 'Avoid' as 'Meh' or 'Maybe don't bother' (especially when from a label that has so much else to offer), this live album (from ambient Italian experimentalists No-Sound) is one of several Kscope records that feels a little nebulous and (whisper it) *a bit boring.* Naturally if you're a No-Sound fan you'll most likely disagree with that, but for our money this album seems rather innocuous; sliding lethargically through layers of alt.electronica and sleep-inducing resonations. It might be fine if you're trying to sleep, but there are more compelling examples in this field to be had elsewhere.

Essential Playlist

Anathema – Endless Ways (THE OPTIMIST, 2017)

Steven Wilson – The Raven That Refused To Sing (THE RAVEN…AND OTHER STORIES, 2013)

The Pineapple Thief – Try As I Might (DISSOLUTION, 2018)

Iamthemorning – Chalk & Coal (LIGHTHOUSE, 2016)

The Pineapple Thief – Nothing At Best (SOMEONE HERE IS MISSING, 2009)

Blackfield – Open Mind (BLACKFIELD, 2004)

North Atlantic Oscillation – August (THE THIRD DAY, 2014)

Anathema – Untouchable Part I (WEATHER SYSTEMS, 2012)

Nordic Giants – Rapture (A SEANCE OF DARK DELUSIONS, 2015)

Amplifier – Matmos (ECHO STREET, 2013)

Sand – Clay (SAND, 2013)

Steven Wilson – Remainder The Black Dog (GRACE FOR DROWNING, 2013)

Gazpacho – The Desert Flight (TICK TOCK, 2009)

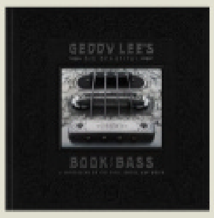
Steven Wilson – Routine (HAND. CANNOT. ERASE, 2015)

Gleb Kolyadin feat. Steve Hogarth – Confluence (GLEB KOLYADIN, 2018)

Se Delan – Dirge (THE FALL, 2014)

Iamthemorning – Touching (OCEAN SOUNDS, 2018)

Geddy Lee's Big Beautiful Book Of Bass



Geddy Lee HARPER DESIGN

Rush man's journey down the vintage-bass rabbit hole.

Lavish. Sumptuous. Coffee-table-cracking. It would be an understatement to say Geddy Lee's entrance into the world of high-end books is an enthusiastic one. Approximately the size and weight of a paving slab, this exhaustive gem serves as a cultural history, a musical love letter and a peek into the particular pathologies of serious collectors with deep pockets. Based on a core of 250 basses from Lee's personal collection, which, incredibly, he only started acquiring in 2012, the Rush bassist's fascination/obsession with the instrument infuses every shimmering page. And shimmering they are.

Crammed with genuine world-class photography by Richard Sibbald, every angle, shadow and close-up could be illustrating a Sotheby's catalogue. It's the instruments themselves though, and Lee's idiosyncratic, yet witty and self-effacing prose that really drives the project. Structurally, Lee dedicates chapters to the big hitters in the industry: Fender, Gibson/Epiphone, Rickenbacker, Hofner and Ampeg, plus another collecting myriad smaller, more niche manufacturers: Burns, Danelectro, Vox et al. It's then all topped off with the icing and bait for the Rush fan – a chronological (Lee's use of, that is, not instrument date) examination of the basses used on stage and recording with the band, replete with signature models, annotated set lists, and the ever-near presence of Lee's long-time bass tech and collection curator John 'Skully' McIntosh.

There's a lot to absorb, and the job of trying to insert the predilections of a self-confessed bass nerd into a wider cultural context – while retaining interest for the less-zealous music fan – is a tricky one. Lee's solution is to intersperse the tech-speak with a succession of entertaining interviews with major proponents of the instrument: John Paul Jones, Robert Trujillo, Les Claypool and Jeff Tweedy, among others. The best of these is a revealing and endearing chat with Bob Daisley and his love (shared by Lee) of Tony Zemaitis's hand-engraved, metal-topped works of art, of which a photo of Lee's own graces the book's cover.

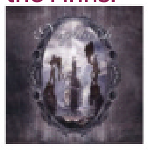
It's not entirely faultless. No one's going to sit down and read it from cover to cover, and the sheer magnitude of it feels intimidating at times. However, between Lee's infectious devotion and handsome production values, it can claim ownership of its title with little complaint.

Tim Batcup

Nightwish

End Of An Era NUCLEAR BLAST

An historic performance from the Finns.



When you watch this magical show from October 21, 2005, it's hard to believe that a day later the band fired vocalist Tarja Turunen. Because what Nightwish have here is peerless. Whatever they've subsequently achieved, which has been considerable, watching the band here on stage in Helsinki reminds you that there was something untouchable about them with their original vocalist.

The performance offers stunning symphonic rock, and a reminder of the way in which the musicianship is intricately interwoven with the vocals – Tarja sweeping majestically through the mix.

Available in various formats, there's also a bonus documentary called *A Day Before Tomorrow* on DVD and Blu-ray versions, guiding us through the fifteen days leading up to this concert. You can tell relations between band and singer are strained, even if most of the dialogue is in Finnish.

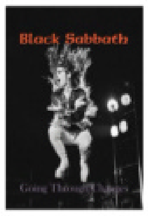
An apt reminder of past glories.

Malcolm Dome

Black Sabbath

Going Through Changes WYMER

A photographic run through the 70s.



There have been so many books on Sabbath that it's hard to think any new one can have much to offer. But this is at least a little different.

It doesn't pretend to be comprehensive, controversial or analytical. What you get here are a selection of photos from the golden era of the band, both onstage and off. And the book is also peppered with quotes from the four during those years, as well as press cuttings.

There's no pretence that this is a definitive book on Sabbath. But some of these photos are previously unpublished, and it does give you the sense of following their story as they changed the face of music.

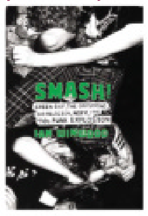
A decent celebration of Sabbath's romp through their first decade, it comes in an (appropriately) black box with five live prints.

Malcolm Dome

Smash! Green Day, The Offspring, NOFX & The 90s Punk Explosion

Ian Winwood DA CAPO

The most unlikely musical revolution since the 70s punk explosion.



By the late 80s, punk was deader than disco in the US, mostly restricted to the Gilman, a tiny Bay Area club which banned drink, drugs and dogs. The journey from underground to globe-conquering mainstream was a classic case of the right people – from Bad Religion's heroin-loving Brett Gurewitz, a businessmen as much as a punk, to Green Day's fiercely ambitious Billie Joe Armstrong – and the right music, which got better as it became more popular.

With the distance that being British brings, but no shortage of access, Ian Winwood is a sharp-eyed guide to a wide-eyed tale packed with curve balls, cameos (did Farrah Fawcett-Majors really leave California to pursue Captain Sensible?), betrayals and friendships.

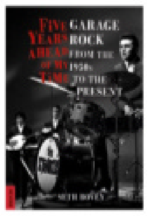
Having explained the explosion brilliantly, Winwood halts the saga at *American Idiot*, wholly omitting the causes of Armstrong's future meltdown; not to mention NOFX's post-Vegas-shooting idiocy, The Offspring's studio paralysis and Bad Religion's re-birth. Volume 2, perhaps?

John Aizlewood

Five Years Ahead Of My Time: Garage Rock From The 1950s To The Present

Seth Bovey REVERB

Fine and thorough account of the ever-reviving guitar genre.



It's forgotten now but by 1958, rock'n'roll was considered to be finished, with Little Richard giving up music to enter the ministry and Elvis joining the army. What commentators didn't reckon with was a vast explosion of young, amateur, makeshift groups across America who would keep the genre alive, buying up instruments in large numbers and dreaming rock'n'roll dreams of their own. When The Beatles conquered America, the same happened

KEVIN NIXON

again, this time worldwide – one of the many fascinating details of Bovey's account is a Uruguayan beat group called Los Mockers, imitation Moptops who took a small portion of South America by storm. After punk, garage entered a postmodern phrase with the brilliant B-52s and Cramps referencing its origins.

Bovey is an academic, but this book is light on theory and copious in historical detail and explanation of the development of a movement that has survived on sheer unquenchable fuzz-tone enthusiasm.

David Stubbs

Lawnmower Deth

Unleashed In The East.... Midlands! WAXY MONKEY

The stoopidest band in the world, on DVD/CD.

Live and sheep dipping from the 2018 Download Festival, the British thrash metal bozo clowns reunion sounds like a whole lot of fun in a Hell's Angels meeting your grandma for tea and scones type of way. Sure, they have the chops (probably the pork ones at the meat raffle in your local pub) but they also have enough saving graces to power this juggernaut of absurdity down the Moto Donington Services.

Icky Ficky is plainly vile, as is *Egg Sandwich*, but the 'classic' may be *Watch Out Grandma Here Comes A Lawnmower,* which essentially does for metal what the Wurzels did for cider rock. Once heard then best soon forgotten, *Jaggered Wedge* takes speaking in drunken tongues to the nth degree, but *Urban Surfer 125* is charming; exactly the kind of tune you'd require to rearrange the furniture in a motorway caff.

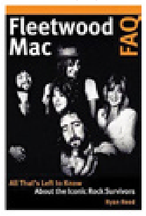
A foolish album, but with certain delicately grassy notes.

Max Bell

Fleetwood Mac FAQ

Ryan Reed BACKBEAT BOOKS

Studious but self-aware tome on fifty years of Mac.



Subtitled *All That's Left To Know About The Iconic Rock Survivors*, this facts-and-fun book for fans of the critically indulged, cocaine-addled soft-rockers shrewdly taps into their most interesting feature: their bonkers saga of bust-ups and back-stories.

It shapes the tale in five phases: the Peter Green era, the transitional era, the Buckingham-Nicks era, the post-classic era and the modern era. While that suggests gravitas on a par with a deconstruction of pointillism, Reed realises how funny the offstage calamities of this band – or, really, series of bands – have been. The recent binning of Lindsey Buckingham appears to have occurred just before publication, but by then there have been enough angst-hilarity crossover episodes to fill twenty books, from "the LSD-fuelled Munich commune incident" to analysis of the Mac's chronically bad cover art.

There are top-10 lists aplenty and interviews with fringe members, producers and crew.

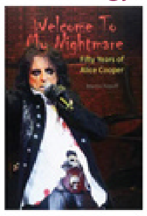
A well-gauged blend of research and irreverence.

Chris Roberts

Welcome To My Nightmare: Fifty Years Of Alice Cooper

Martin Popoff WYMER PUBLISHING

Large-format coffee-table chronology from prolific writer.



It's never a good sign when a book loses you in its author's introduction, but *Welcome To My Nightmare* manages with room to spare. To an Alice Cooper fan, the words "The classic Alice albums from *Love It To Death* through *Muscle Of Love* generally sound like crap" is nothing other than fighting talk. Frankly, if that's the way you feel, write a book about someone else.

But of course, Martin Popoff already has. Before 'celebrating' Alice in print, he's written books about Rush, Queen, Ramones, Rainbow, Dio, Floyd, Sabbath, Maiden, Purple, BÖC, The Clash etc and enough bulky, subjective metal guides to choke a horse.

Anyway, the Cooper story's told in chronological order, with quotes from Alice, his bandmates and associates, but that it's told by a writer who thinks *Killer*, *School's Out* and *Billion Dollar Babies* "generally sound like crap" makes it very hard for any Cooper connoisseur to take it entirely seriously.

Ian Fortnam

For the stories behind the best albums and the bands that produced them...

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LIVE!

The High-Voltage What's On Guide

Edited By Ian Fortnam (Reviews) and Dave Ling (Tours)

KEVIN NIXON

P110

Def Leppard

Did *Hysteria* cause hysteria at London's O2?

P104 Interviews
P107 Tour Dates
P110 Live Reviews

> "Every guitar owner and his cat, including some established artists, wanted to join the band."

Inglorious

The new-generation classic rockers are back with a revised line-up and new music.

★ Inglorious formed in February 2014.
★ They are supported on these upcoming dates by City Of Thieves.
★ James appeared in the 2018 touring version of Jeff Wayne's *War Of The Worlds*.

Following the sudden departures of guitarists Andreas Eriksson and Drew Lowe and bassist Colin Parkinson, and with the imminent release of the band's third album, *Ride To Nowhere*, frontman Nathan James explains where the UK hard rockers Inglorious go from here.

Paraphrasing Oscar Wilde, to lose one band member might be considered a misfortune, to lose two careless, but to part with three?
It was a hell of a day. I saw it coming. But what it made myself and Phil [Beaver, drums] realise is that this is for life. If you're not born to be in a band and to be a friggin' rock star then it cannot be taught.

With a third album about to be released and the band about to begin a massive tour, the timing couldn't have been any worse.
No. The experience was tough and it left me quite angry. But we didn't get on. I want to be happy on tour. I want to walk out on stage at Shepherd's Bush Empire with a group that has the same goals, dreams and focus as I do. And if those guys don't feel that way then they don't deserve to be there.

What can you tell us about the revised line-up?
Every guitar owner and his cat, including some established artists, wanted to join. The new band will be announced on the release of the album [on January 25 via Frontiers].

Although the former members played on the new record, you wrote all of the melodies, lyrics and one fifth of the music?
Yeah. So to all those people on Facebook who said things are going to change, that it'll be a completely different band, that's rubbish. I'm still here. It all goes back to being happy, and this album was quite hard for me to write. I lost a lot of people along the way, including my grandfather and one of my best friends.

It has some very personal songs, like *Never Alone*.
That's about a lady called Tina who looked after me when I was young and went off the rails. I cried as I recorded it.

Will another of its best songs, *I Don't Know You*, appear in the live set?
Yes, absolutely. Further down the line it's also going to be a single.

Last year Inglorious toured with spoof hair-metallers Steel Panther. Was that as much fun as it sounds on paper?
Yeah. It was our second tour with Steel Panther, and this time a lot of people in the crowd were there for Inglorious. It was really cool to walk on stage at Hammy O and have five thousand people cheer.

You've already mentioned Shepherd's Bush Empire. On this tour you'll be playing by far the biggest venues Inglorious have headlined. Are you at all nervous?
Not at all. After you've exposed your soul on live reality TV and been judged by the nation [James appeared on *The Voice* in 2012 and reached the quarter-finals of Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Superstar*] you grow a very thick skin.

That's good, because to some you're seen as an egomaniac. Back in 2017 you boasted that rock music "needed" a band like Inglorious. Seeing those comments in print, how did you feel?
I felt they were completely fair. Look, I've worked my bollocks off for my entire life. You don't just wake up and sing like I do, it doesn't just happen. I fully deserve to be where I am and I believe very sincerely that Inglorious should be celebrated.

It sounds like you're enjoying proving a few people wrong.
Yeah, I am. In the UK we are the only band doing this at our level, so you can either get behind us and support something that's young and British and good and exciting, or you can sit and moan about the fact that I started out on a reality TV show. **DL**

The tour begins on January 28.

The Dandy Warhols

The brains behind *Bohemian Like You* are coming to town.

Frontman/guitarist Courtney Taylor-Taylor previews a 25th-anniversary visit from the alt.rockers from Portland, Oregon.

Courtney Taylor-Taylor is quite a name.
It was sort of a thing that happened, and I don't tell anyone why [the second Taylor was added during the last millennium] or what instigated it, because it's far more interesting to let them guess.

This is your first time in *Classic Rock*. How comfortable or otherwise do you feel sharing column space with Led Zeppelin, Guns N' Roses and Bowie?
It's flattering but a little weird to me. But then I guess we have been around for twenty-five years. When we toured with Bowie and the Stones I realised that those guys are musically gifted in a way that just doesn't exist any more. Lennon, Jagger and Richards were all so fucking talented, they're like elven little creatures.

Given that this is a twenty-fifth anniversary tour, will the set-list be more nostalgia-based than usual?
Rehearsals begin in a day or two so we don't know. We made our new record [*Why You So Crazy*] in a very modern way, via file-sharing, almost like a bunch of nineteen-year-olds might have done. It's really, really, really cool. So we're learning this record and… we'll see.

Can you cite a towering high and a low from the band's first quarter-century?
The first time we opened for the Stones [in 2006] was quite an experience. Their crowd seemed to dig us. Forty-five minutes later we were hanging out with their families, eating their food and drinking their wine. It was unbelievably cool. The lowest low was watching *Dig!* [a 2004 documentary] and realising that we had allowed this director to film us on a twelve-hour drinking bender and make us look like winos. Being mis-portrayed without any form of rebuttal was a real nadir in my life.

You contributed to the book *Sex Tips From Rock Stars*. What was your advice?
When people say that blondes have more fun, they probably haven't dated a redhead. That's worth trying. Redheads have more fun than goths. **DL**

The UK tour begins on January 29.

Mud Morganfield

Muddy Waters's son on filling the biggest shoes in the business.

Larry 'Mud' Morganfield is the eldest son of the late, great Muddy Waters. Just like his father did, the award-winning guitarist and vocalist pays his bills through playing the blues – specifically the old-school Chicago style of the genre's heyday. A live set from the 64-year-old will be a highlight of the London Blues Week.

***Classic Rock* seems to ask a lot of children of famous musicians about the potential burdens , but you might have the biggest problem of any of them.**
[Laughs] It's a double-edged sword, man. Dad's were the biggest shoes to fill, but doing this is all I know. It can be pretty rough, but it gives me the chance to go out there and play for people that might not have heard of my dad.

You didn't become a professional musician until your father passed away in 1983, by which time you were almost thirty years old. Why was that?
I started late because I had to get me some blues. You can't sing no blues if you ain't ever had none [laughs]. If you haven't gone through the ups and downs of life, how can you sing about the blues? You're just lying to yourself. I had to get me some blues, man.

Was Muddy a good father?
My dad was a great dad, but he was always busy. I never went hungry for a day, but discipline came from my mum. She was the one that taught me how to ride a bike. I wanted to be a drummer at first, and he made sure that every Christmas I got a brand new set of drums. It wasn't bad, but he never threw a ball for me. I missed that.

"I started late because I had to get me some blues."

Did he pass on any advice to you about your career?
Naaaw, all he said was to be tougher with people [in a financial sense].

Do you think he'd be proud of you?
No doubt about it, man. Like I said, I play for a bunch of kids who don't even know him. I give them a glimpse of what it might be like if he was still here. I sing in the same range as him.

Paul Oscher, your father's harmonica player, once said you were "the closest thing to Muddy I have ever heard". That's some compliment.
Yeah, man. That was a great compliment. I'm grateful to my higher power that I can do some of the stuff that dad did.

This will be your first time at London Blues Week.
We tried a couple of years back but couldn't reach an agreement. Hot diggety dog, I'm looking forward to coming.

Why does the blues keep rolling onwards, refusing to die?
There's a lot of stuff behind it – the slaves in the field, a lot of hurt, and some pleasure, too – but where's it gonna go? That's why there's blues. **DL**

Mud Morganfield plays London Blues Week at London's 100 Club on January 19. London Blues Week runs from January 14 to 19.

Francis Dunnery

The former It Bites guitarist/vocalist revisits the band's debut album.

The Cumbria-born guitarist/vocalist, now a long-term resident of the US, plays three UK shows to celebrate his former group It Bites' 1986 album *The Big Lad In The Windmill*.

Why are you performing only three shows in the UK?
I'm tired of playing towns that don't support me, because the five thousand dollars per night comes out of my pocket. The music industry that I grew up in is dead and not coming back. Let's be honest, it's not the survival of the fittest, it's the survival of those that can adapt. I'm fortunate to have never been very popular, so I won't miss it when it finally collapses. Luckily I can play three major cities, sell out, completely and utterly enjoy myself and make some cash. I bet you I have more fun than any band you know.

Now twenty-two years old, how does *The Big Lad* stand up today?
It stands up like a werewolf's chopper. Cumbrians are the last undiscovered people in the UK. It was music from a lost race. I wish I knew what I know now. We'd have been bigger than Tony Iommi and I could have easily made my child support every month.

Who will be in your band for these shows?
Pete Jones is on keyboards because he's incredibly musical. Luke Machin [of the band Machine] plays guitar because he already knows all the stuff. Paul Brown is on bass because unlike a lot of players you can actually hear him. The drummer is Bjorn Fryklund, who I found online and seems rock enough to sound manly and prog enough to play all of the time changes with authenticity. We're yet to meet, but he's a Sagittarius so I'm sure he'll be okay.

> **"It will be full-on It Bites music. I'm the best bloke to do me that I know."**

How close will the arrangements of the songs be to the original album versions?
These live versions will be completely authentic. You can't do reggae versions of these songs. It will be full-on It Bites music. It's something I've learned to do quite well. I'm the best bloke to do me that I know.

When you heard the newly released five-disc It Bites box set *Live In London*, which brings together recordings from the Marquee in 1986 to Hammersmith in 1990, on your final tour with the band, what emotions did it generate in you?
None at all. It's like me showing you naked pictures of your ex-wife and expecting you to go: "Phwoooor!" We were fucking intense and some of those shows captured it.

The release of *Live In London* prompted a fan to plead on your Facebook page for a reunion of the original It Bites – "Pink Floyd did it, and they hate each other…"
I don't hate any of them. I think they are amazing. Great guys, all of them. I have great memories. It was great music from a great band. But no, there won't be a reunion. **DL**

The first date is in Wolverhampton on January 18.

Mastodon

On offer is "a wild evening of intelligent heavy music".

The American metal giants wrap up the touring of a record made under considerable stress, including family illness, their own health issues and battles with sobriety. Drummer Brann Dailor looks at the past and to the future.

How close did Mastodon come to breaking up during the making of the band's current latest album, 2017's *Emperor Of Sand*?
It was never really on the table. Mastodon is the lighthouse that really got us through those past few difficult years, and everything in the last few months as well.

Yes, we were sorry to hear about the death of the band's manager, Nick John. It's a nice touch that fans are being invited to donate to cancer charities in his honour.
Nick died of pancreatic cancer and there have been no strides towards a cure for that. It was really brutal way to go, and we loved the guy so much.

***Emperor Of Sand* was the band's first full-blown concept album since *Crack The Skye* in 2009. Mastodon positively thrive as storytellers.**
Some of my favourite albums are the ones with a tale behind them, such as *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway* [Genesis] or *Abigail* [King Diamond]. It's great to immerse yourself in a record the way you would a book.

Scott Kelly of Neurosis joins you this time out. What's his role in the show?
We'll play for over an hour, take a breather and then come back out and do all of the Scott stuff and maybe some other things.

Did Mastodon choose their two support acts, Kvelertak and Mutoid Man?
Yeah, we did. If you're a fan of Mastodon you're probably into those two bands as well, and having them out on the road with us makes for a wild evening of intelligent heavy music.

With the end of the *Emperor Of Sand* campaign in sight, are you already making plans for the next record?
Yeah. There are a lot of riffs flying around. I don't want it to be commercial in any way. Let's go a little bit more experimental. **DL**

The tour concludes in Bristol on January 26.

Tour Dates

10CC

Guildford	G Live	Mar 1
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Mar 2
Norwich	Theatre Royal	Mar 3
Southend-on-Sea	Cliffs Pavilion	Mar 5
Bournemouth	Pavilion	Mar 6
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Mar 8
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Mar 9
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Mar 10
York	Barbican	March 11
Gateshead	The Sage	March 14
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Mar 15
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Mar 16
Bristol	Hippodrome	Mar 17
Leicester	De Montfort Hall	April 30
Eastbourne	Congress Theatre	May 1
London	Royal Albert Hall	May 2

Recommended

ALICE IN CHAINS, BLACK REBEL MOTORCYCLE CLUB

Glasgow	Braehead Arena	May 23
Birmingham	Barclaycard Arena	May 25
London	Wembley Arena	May 25

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

MATT ANDERSEN

London	Camden Dingwalls	Mar 22
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Mar 23
Glasgow	Blue Arrow	Mar 24
Nottingham	Bodega	Mar 25

ATOMIC ROOSTER

London	Chelsea Under The Bridge	Jan 25

AVANTASIA

London	Kentish Town Forum	Apr 16

AVATAR

Glasgow	Garage	Jan 16
Birmingham	Institute	Jan 17
Manchester	The Ritz	Jan 18
Bristol	Anson Rooms	Jan 19
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Jan 20

KRIS BARRAS BAND

Cardiff	The Globe	Feb 6
Manchester	Deaf Institute	Feb 7
Newcastle	The Cluny	Feb 8
Hull	Welly Club	Feb 9
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Feb 12
Cambridge	Portland Arms	Feb 13
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Feb 18
Buckley	Tivoli	Feb 15
Leek	Foxlowe Arts Centre	Feb 16
Bristol	Thekla	Feb 21
Fleet	The Harlington	Feb 22
London	Highbury Garage	Feb 23
Brighton	The Haunt	Feb 26
Oxford	The Bullingdon	Feb 27
Truro	Old Bakery	Mar 1
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Mar 8
Tavistock	The Wharf	Mar 9
Poole	Winter's End Festival	Mar 10
Edinburgh	Voodoo Rooms	Mar 15

MARTIN BARRE BAND

Skegness	Great British Rock & Blues Fest	Jan 19
Bilston	Robin 2	Jan 23
St Helens	Citadel	Jan 25
Minehead	Giants Of Rock Festival	Jan 26

BEHEMOTH, AT THE GATES, WOLVES IN THE THRONE ROOM

Birmingham	Institute	Feb 7
London	Kentish Town Forum	Feb 8
Manchester	The Ritz	Feb 9

DAVE BICKLER

London	Highbury Garage	Mar 11
Bristol	Thekla	Mar 12
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Mar 13
Prestatyn	Hard Rock Hell AOR	Mar 14

BRANT BJORK, THE SONIC DAWN

London	Islington Academy	Feb 23

BLOODSTOCK
SCORPIONS, ANTHRAX, DEE SNIDER, QUEENSRŸCHE, MORE

Derbyshire	Catton Park	Aug 8-11

BLUE OCTOBER

Oxford	Academy	Feb 15
Manchester	The Ritz	Feb 16
Bristol	Academy	Feb 17
Brighton	Concorde 2	Feb 19
Glasgow	Garage	Feb 21
Birmingham	Institute	Feb 22
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Feb 23

GETTY

BLUE ÖYSTER CULT, THE TEMPERANCE MOVEMENT

Norwich	UEA	Feb 21
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Feb 22
Newcastle	Academy	Feb 23
Glasgow	Academy	Feb 24
Leeds	Academy	Feb 26
Birmingham	Institute	Feb 27
Bristol	St Philips Gate	Feb 28
Manchester	Academy	Mar 1

JOE BONAMASSA

Glasgow	SEC Armadillo	Apr 22
London	Royal Albert Hall	Apr 24-26

BON JOVI, MANIC STREET PREACHERS

Liverpool	Anfield Stadium	Jun 19
London	Wembley Stadium	Jun 21
Coventry	Ricoh Arena	Jun 23

BILLY BREMNER'S ROCKFILES

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Jan 23

BUCKCHERRY, HOOBASTANK, ADELITAS WAY

Manchester	The Ritz	Feb 5
Bristol	Academy	Feb 6
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Feb 8
Hull	Asylum	Feb 9
Birmingham	Institute	Feb 10
Newcastle	Academy	Feb 12
Glasgow	Galvanisers	Feb 13
Nottingham	Rock City	Feb 15
Oxford	Academy	Feb 16
Norwich	UEA	Feb 17

FRANCK CARDUCCI BAND

Cambridge	Portland Arms	Mar 20
Liverpool	Zanzibar Club	Mar 21
Newcastle	Think Tank	Mar 22
Glasgow	Ivory Blacks	Mar 23
Stourport	Music Without Boundaries Festival	Mar 24

CATS IN SPACE

Wimborne	Tivoli Theatre	Mar 27
Hexham	Queen's Hall Arts Centre	Apr 24
Wavendon	The Stables	Apr 25
Pontypridd	Muni Arts Centre	Apr 26
Glasgow	Oran Mor	May 9
Buckley	Tivoli	May 10
Dublin	Button Factory	Jun 13

CATS IN SPACE, ROCK GODDESS, DIRTY THRILLS

Bristol	Thekla	Mar 8
Birmingham	Institute	Mar 9
Manchester	Academy 3	Mar 14
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Mar 15
London	Highbury Garage	Mar 16

CELLAR DARLING, BLANKET, APPEARANCE OF NOTHING

Sheffield	Studio	Mar 21
Cardiff	The Globe	Mar 23
Birmingham	Hare & Hounds	Mar 24
Norwich	Waterfront	Mar 26
Hull	Welly	Mar 27
Glasgow	Audio	Mar 28
Dublin	On The Rox	Mar 29
Manchester	Academy 3	Mar 30
London	Camden Jazz Café	Mar 31

CHELSEA BLUES RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL
MARTIN BARRE, STEVE NIMMO TRIO, MORE

London	Chelsea Under The Bridge	Mar 30

CLIMAX BLUES BAND

York	Fibbers	Feb 20
Manchester	Factory	Feb 21
Edinburgh	La Belle Angele	Feb 22
Troon	Winter Blues Fest	Feb 23
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Feb 24
Torrington	Plough Arts Centre	Mar 1
Sheffield	Greystones	Mar 6
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Mar 7
Bilston	Robin 2	Mar 8
London	Manette Street Borderline	Mar 7

JOHN CORABI

London	Camden Black Heart	Feb 2
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Feb 3
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Feb 5

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

NICK MASON'S SAUCERFUL OF SECRETS

Set the controls for Syd-era Pink Floyd, and some songs that even Floyd barely touched live during the past 40 years.

See over the page for dates. Currently April 30 and May 1, 3 and 4.

CRASHDIET

London	Islington Academy	Apr 5

THE DANDY WARHOLS

Birmingham	Institute	Jan 29
Hull	Old Fruitmarket	Jan 30
Manchester	Albert Hall	Jan 31
London	Brixton Academy	Feb 1

DISTURBED

London	Alexandra Palace	May 11
Glasgow	Academy	May 13
Manchester	Apollo	May 14

DORO

London	Camden Underworld	Mar 13

DOWNLOAD FESTIVAL
DEF LEPPARD, SLIPKNOW, TOOL, SLASH, WHITESNAKE, SLAYER, MORE

Leicestershire	Donington Park	Jun 14-16

DROPKICK MURPHYS

Birmingham	Academy	Apr 21
Glasgow	Academy	Apr 21
Leeds	Academy	Apr 23
Manchester	Academy	Apr 21
London	Brixton Academy	Apr 26

FRANCIS DUNNERY

Wolverhampton	Slade Rooms	Jan 18
Manchester	Club Academy	Jan 19
London	Shepherd's Bush Bush Hall	Jan 20

BOB DYLAN, NEIL YOUNG

London	Hyde Park BST Festival	Jul 12

EDEN'S CURSE, MOB RULES, DEGREED

London	Camden Underworld	Apr 14
Newcastle	Trillians	Apr 15
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Apr 16
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Apr 17
Bilston	Robin 2	Apr 18
Sheffield	Corporation	Apr 19
Pontypridd	Muni Arts Centre	Apr 20
Glasgow	Garage	Apr 21

TOMMY EMMANUEL, JOHN KNOWLES

Perth	Concert Hall	Mar 7
Coventry	Warwick Arts Centre	Mar 9
Shrewsbury	Theatre Severn	Mar 10
Salisbury	City Hall	Mar 11
London	Royal Festival Hall	Mar 20
Sheffield	City Hall	Mar 21
Manchester	RNCM	Mar 22
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Mar 24

ENUFF Z'NUFF

Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Feb 13
London	Camden Underworld	Feb 14
Nuneaton	Queens Hall	Feb 15
Bradford	Trash	Feb 16
Buckley	Tivoli	Feb 17
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Feb 18

BRIAN FALLON (UNPLUGGED)

Newcastle	Wylam Brewery	Feb 5
Edinburgh	Queens Hall	Feb 6
Manchester	Albert Hall	Feb 7
Cardiff	Tramshed	Feb 8
London	Highbury Union Chapel	Feb 9
Cambridge	Junction	Feb 22
Brighton	St George's Church	Feb 23
Bath	Komedia	Feb 24

FLEETWOOD MAC, PRETENDERS

Dublin	RDS Arena	Jun 13
London	Wembley Stadium	Jun 16, 18

FM

Skegness	Great British Rock & Blues Festival	Jan 19
Minehead	Giants Of Rock	Jan 27
Preston	Guildhall	Feb 8
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Feb 16
Reading	Sub 89	Mar 1

FOO FIGHTERS

Belfast	Vital Festival	Aug 19
Dublin	RDS Arena	Aug 21
Leeds	Festival	Aug 23
Reading	Festival	Aug 25

STEVE FORBERT

Liverpool	Philharmonic Music Room	Jan 23
Glasgow	St Andrews In The Square	Jan 24
Derby	Flowerpot	Feb 5
Gosforth	Civic Hall	Feb 7
Leeds	Thorner Victory Hall	Feb 8
Aberdour	Woodside Hotel	Feb 9

FRONTIERS ROCK FESTIVAL
INGLORIOUS, WAYWARD SONS, VEGA, MORE

Birmingham	Institute	Feb 2

THE FUZZTONES

London	Gt Portland Street 229 Club	Jan 25

GUS G

London	Camden Underworld	Jan 9

GENE LOVES JEZEBEL

Manchester	The Factory	Jan 11
Glasgow	Ivory Blacks	Jan 12
Newcastle	Trillians	Jan 13
Bristol	The Fleece	Jan 17
Bedford	Esquires	Jan 18
London	Islington Academy	Jan 19

GIANTS OF ROCK FESTIVAL
SKID ROW, ROGER CHAPMAN, FM, SWEET, MORE

Minehead	Butlins	Jan 25-28

GODSMACK

London	Kentish Town Forum	Feb 27
Manchester	The Ritz	Feb 28
Birmingham	Institute	Mar 1

GOOD CHARLOTTE

London	Alexandra Palace	Feb 20

MICHALE GRAVES

London	Camden Underworld	Jan 17
Bridgwater	Cobblestones	Jan 18
Swansea	Hangar 18	Jan 19
Manchester	Rebellion	Jan 20
Glasgow	Audio	Jan 21
Aberdeen	The Assembly	Jan 22
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Jan 23

LIVE!

Dunfermline	PJ Malloys	Jan 24
Belfast	Voodoos	Jan 25
Dublin	Voodoo Lounge	Jan 26
Bournemouth	Old Fire Station	Jan 28
Liverpool	Phase 1	Jan 29
Sheffield	Mulberry Tavern	Jan 30
Nottingham	The Square Centre Arts	Jan 31
Stoke-On-Trent	Underground	Feb 1

THE GREAT BRITISH ROCK & BLUES FESTIVAL
FM, DARE, NINE BELOW ZERO, ANIMALS & FRIENDS, MORE

Skegness	Butlins	Jan 18-21

GRETA VAN FLEET

Newcastle	Academy	Mar 5
Glasgow	Academy	Mar 7
Leeds	Academy	Mar 8
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 10
Liverpool	Mountford Hall	Mar 11

STEVE HACKETT

Aylesbury	Waterside	Nov 2
Folkestone	Leas Cliff Hall	Nov 3
Sheffield	City Hall	Nov 5
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Nov 6
Leicester	De Montfort Hall	Nov 8
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Nov 9
Liverpool	Philharmonic	Nov 11
Brighton	Dome	Nov 12
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Nov 13
Salisbury	City Hall	Nov 15
Reading	Hexagon	Nov 16
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Nov 18
York	Barbican	Nov 19
Bath	Forum	Nov 20
Halifax	Victoria Theatre	Nov 22
Gateshead	The Sage	Nov 23
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Nov 25
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Nov 26
Southend-on-Sea	Cliffs Pavilion	Nov 27
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Nov 29

HAKEN

Manchester	Academy 3	Feb 15
Glasgow	St Luke's	Feb 16
Bristol	The Fleece	Feb 17

HALESTORM, IN THIS MOMENT, NEW YEARS DAY

Glasgow	Hydro	Nov 24
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Nov 25
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Nov 27
London	Alexandra Palace	Nov 28

'SUGARAY' HARFORD, JO HARMAN

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Jan 17

ROY HARPER

Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Mar 12
Bexhill	De La Warr Pavilion	Mar 14
London	Palladium	Mar 16
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Mar 18
Gateshead	The Sage	Mar 20
Leeds	Town Hall	Mar 22

A TRIBUTE TO JON HISEMAN
BARBARA THOMPSON, DON AIREY, CHRIS FARLOWE, MORE

London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Feb 2

Recommended

GLENN HUGHES PERFORMS CLASSIC DEEP PURPLE,
LAURENCE JONES

Holmfirth	Picturedrome	May 14
Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	May 15
Birmingham	Institute	May 17
Norwich	UEA	May 18
St Albans	Alban Arena	May 20
Salisbury	Alban Arena	May 21
Liverpool	Academy	May 23
Nottingham	Rock City	May 24

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

INGLORIOUS, CITY OF THIEVES

Southampton	Engine Rooms	Jan 28
Bristol	Academy	Jan 29
Norwich	Waterfront	Jan 31
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Feb 1
Birmingham	Frontiers Rock Festival	Feb 2
Nottingham	Rock City	Feb 3
Glasgow	Garage	Feb 5
Newcastle	Boilershop	Feb 6
Manchester	Academy 2	Feb 7
Bingley	Arts Centre	Feb 8

WILKO JOHNSON, GLENN TILBROOK

Buxton	Opera House	Feb 28
Warrington	Parr Hall	Mar 1
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Mar 2

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

LENNY KRAVITZ

Are you gonna go his way? For a live performer like him and some shit-hot tunes it's worth the trip to East London.

London	O2 Arena	Jun 11

Southend-on-Sea	Cliffs Pavilion	Mar 8
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Mar 9
St Albans	Alban Arena	Mar 10
Bilston	Robin 2	Mar 13
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Mar 14
Newcastle	Opera House	Mar 15
Stockton-on-Tees	Princess Alexandra Auditorium	Apr 11
Edinburgh	Queens Hall	Apr 12
York	Fibbers	Mar 13
Cambridge	Junction	Apr 25
Cardiff	Tramshed	Apr 26
Cheltenham	Town Hall	Apr 27

JUMP

Glasgow	Ivory Blacks	Mar 15
Maltby	Wesley Arts Centre	Mar 16
Southampton	1865	Mar 17
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Mar 22

KAMELOT

Manchester	Club Academy	Mar 21
Birmingham	Academy 2	Mar 22
Pwllheli	Hammerfest	Mar 23

KING CRIMSON

London	Royal Albert Hall	Jun 18-20

KINGDOM OF MADNESS

Skegness	Great British Rock & Blues Festival	Jan 20
Minehead	Giants Of Rock Festival	Jan 26
Buckley	Tivoli	Mar 1
York	Fibbers	Mar 2
Manchester	Academy 3	Mar 3
Newbury	Arlington Arts Centre	Mar 7
London	Malet Street ULU	Mar 8
Poole	Winter's End Festival	Mar 9
Wavendon	The Stables	Mar 17
Pontypridd	The Muni	Mar 29
Alfreton	Rock & Bike Festival	Jul 13
Faversham	A New Day Festival	Aug 3

KING KING

Nottingham	Rock City	Jan 31
Birmingham	Town Hall	Feb 1
Cardiff	Tramshed	Feb 2
London	Camden Koko	Feb 7
Bournemouth	Old Fire Station	Feb 8
Brighton	Concorde 2	Feb 9
Norwich	Waterfront	Feb 10
Manchester	Academy 2	Feb 15
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Feb 16
Glasgow	Academy	Feb 17

KISS

Birmingham	Resorts World Arena	Jul 9
London	O2 Arena	Jul 11
Manchester	Arena	Jul 12
Newcastle	Metro Radio Arena	Jul 14
Glasgow	The Hydro	Jul 16

LENNY KRAVITZ

London	O2 Arena	Jun 11

LAIBACH

London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Mar 1
Glasgow	SWG3	Mar 3

THE LEMON TWIGS

Manchester	The Ritz	Feb 21

Glasgow	Saint Luke's	Feb 22
Newcastle	Riverside	Feb 23
Leeds	Stylus	Feb 25
Birmingham	Institute 2	Feb 26
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Feb 27

AYNSLEY LISTER

Wavendon	The Stables	Jan 15
Bilston	Robin 2	Jan 17
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Jan 29
Winchester	Discovery Centre	Feb 2
Crawley	The Hawth	Mar 8

LYNYRD SKYNYRD, STATUS QUO

Glasgow	Hydro Arena	Jun 26
Manchester	Arena	Jun 27
London	Wembley Arena	Jun 29
Birmingham	Genting Arena	Jun 30

ERJA LYYTINEN

Brighton	Komedia	Mar 18
Bridport	Electric Palace	Mar 19
Wavendon	The Stables	Mar 20
Sheffield	The Greystones	Mar 21
Scarborough	Blues Festival	Mar 22
Glasgow	Nice 'N' Sleazy	Mar 23
Kinross	Green Hotel	Mar 24
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Mar 26
Oxford	The Bullingdon	Mar 27
Birmingham	Hare And Hounds	Mar 28
Southport	The Atkinson	Mar 29
Bromsgrove	The Artrix	Mar 30

MANIC STREET PREACHERS

Dublin	Olympia Theatre	May 12
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	May 14
Bath	Forum	May 15
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	May 17, 18
Manchester	The Ritz	May 20, 21
Birmingham	Academy	May 23
Southampton	Guildhall	May 24
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	May 26
York	Barbican	May 27
Liverpool	Olympia	May 30
Leicester	De Montfort Hall	May 31
Cardiff	Castle	Jun 29

MANOWAR

Birmingham	Academy	Apr 19, 20

BERNIE MARSDEN

London	Chelsea Under The Bridge	Mar 1

MASSIVE WAGONS

Bristol	Thekla	Apr 6
Birmingham	Asylum	Apr 12
London	Tufnell Park Dome	Apr 13
Glasgow	Garage	Apr 19
Manchester	Academy 3	Apr 20

NICK MASON'S SAUCERFUL OF SECRETS

Aylesbury	Friars	Apr 30
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	May 1
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	May 3, 4

MASTODON

Belfast	Ulster Hall	Jan 14
Dublin	Olympia	Jan 15
Southampton	Guildhall	Jan 17
Newcastle	Academy	Jan 18
Glasgow	Academy	Jan 19
Leeds	Academy	Jan 21
Birmingham	Academy	Jan 22
Norwich	UEA	Jan 24
London	Brixton Academy	Jan 25
Bristol	Academy	Jan 26

DAVE MATTHEWS BAND

London	Hammersmith Apollo	Mar 12, 13

CHANTEL McGREGOR

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Jan 14
Wavendon	The Stables	Mar 20
Harpendon	Public Halls	Apr 20

MIDNIGHT OIL

Manchester	Apollo	Jun 9
London	Brixton Academy	Jun 13

MILLION DOLLAR RELOAD

Belfast	Empire	Feb 9

MONSTER MAGNET, PUPPY

London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Jan 29

MUD MORGANFIELD

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Jan 19

THE NEAL MORSE BAND

London	Islington Assembly Hall	Mar 24

MOTT THE HOOPLE '74,
TAX THE HEAT

Manchester	Academy	Apr 19
Glasgow	Barrowland	Apr 20
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Apr 21
Gateshead	The Sage	Apr 23
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Apr 26, 27

BOB MOULD

London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Mar 14
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Mar 15
Edinburg	Liquid Rooms	Mar 16
Manchester	Academy 2	Mar 17

MUSE

London	London Stadium	Jun 1
Bristol	Ashton Gate	Jun 5
Manchester	Etihad Stadium	Jun 8

OZZY OSBOURNE, JUDAS PRIEST

Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Feb 1
Manchester	Manchester Arena	Feb 3
Newcastle	Metro Radio Arena	Feb 5
Glasgow	The Hydro	Feb 7
Birmingham	Genting Arena	Feb 9
London	O2 Arena	Feb 11

OVERKILL, DESTRUCTION, FLOTSAM & JETSAM, MESHIAAK

London	Islington Academy	Mar 21
Pwllheli	Hammerfest	Mar 22
Dublin	Academy	Mar 23
Glasgow	SWG3	Mar 24

CARL PALMER'S ELP LEGACY

Great Torrington	Plough Arts Centre	Jan 26
Minehead	Giants Of Rock Festival	Jan 27
Wavendon	The Stables	Jan 28
Southampton	1865	Jan 29

PAPA ROACH, NOTHING MORE

Southampton	Guildhall	Apr 13
Exeter	Great Hall	Apr 14
Bristol	Academy	Apr 15
London	Kentish Town Forum	Apr 17
Manchester	Academy	Apr 20
Leeds	Academy	Apr 21
Newcastle	Academy	Apr 23
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Apr 24
Aberdeen	Music Hall	Apr 25
Norwich	UEA	Apr 27
Nottingham	Rock City	Apr 28
Birmingham	Academy	Apr 29

THE PINEAPPLE THIEF

Newcastle	Academy	Mar 20
Glasgow	St Luke's	Mar 21
Manchester	The Ritz	Mar 22
Birmingham	Institute 2	Mar 23
Bristol	The Fleece	Mar 25

P.O.D., ALIEN ANT FARM, '68

Exeter	Lemon Grove	Feb 26
Bristol	Academy	Feb 27
Norwich	Waterfront	Feb 28
Oxford	Academy	Mar 1
London	Kentish Town Forum	Mar 2
Newcastle	Academy	Mar 3
Glasgow	Garage	Mar 5
Hull	The Welly	Mar 6
Birmingham	Institute	Mar 7
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 9
Manchester	The Ritz	Mar 10

GETTY

Limerick	Dolans	Mar 12
Belfast	Limelight	Mar 13
Dublin	Button Factory	Mar 14

ANA POPOVIC

Cardiff	Globe	May 3
Chester	Live Rooms	May 4
Manchester	Deaf Institute	May 5
Newcastle	Cluny	May 7
Glasgow	Òran Mór	May 8
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	May 9
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	May 10
London	Manette Street Borderline	May 11

POWERWOLF, AMARANTHE, KISSIN' DYNAMITE

Manchester	Academy 2	Jan 19
Glasgow	SWG3	Jan 20
Bristol	SWX	Jan 21
Birmingham	The Mill	Jan 22

RAMBLIN' MAN FAIR
FOREIGNER, THE DARKNESS, BETH HART, ANATHEMA, MORE

Maidstone	Mote Park	Jul 19-21

RAMMSTEIN

Milton Keynes	Stadium MK	Jul 6

READING AND LEEDS FESTIVALS
FOO FIGHTERS, TWENTY ONE PILOTS, MORE

Reading	Richfield Avenue	Aug 23-25
Leeds	Bramham Park	Aug 23-25

THE REVOLUTION

London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Feb 13

Recommended

RIVAL SONS

Newcastle	Northumbria Institute	Jan 31
Glasgow	Barrowland	Feb 1
Manchester	Academy	Feb 2
Leeds	Academy	Feb 4
Birmingham	Academy	Feb 5
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Feb 6

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

RIVERSIDE

Bristol	SWX	Mar 21
Leeds	Stylus	Mar 22
Glasgow	SWG 3	Mar 23
Birmingham	The Mill	Mar 24

ROCK AND BLUES CUSTOM SHOW
INGLORIOUS, DIAMOND HEAD, KRIS BARRAS BAND, MORE

Pentrich	Coney Grey Showground	Jul 25-27

ROCKIN' THE BLUES
WALTER TROUT, JONNY LANG, KRIS BARRAS BAND

London	Kentish Town Forum	Jun 4

TODD RUNDGREN

London	Hammersmith Apollo	Apr 6

SAVOY BROWN

London	Chelsea Under The Bridge	Apr 12

JOHN SCOFIELD

London	Cadogan Hall	May 17

JOANNE SHAW TAYLOR

Liverpool	Academy	Mar 15
Birmingham	Institute	Mar 16
Manchester	The Ritz	Mar 17
Cardiff	Tramshed	Mar 19
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Mar 20
Portsmouth	Pyramids Centre	Mar 21
Cambridge	Junction	Mar 23
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Mar 24
Edinburgh	Queens Hall	Mar 26
Glasgow	SWG3	Mar 27

SLASH FEATURING MYLES KENNEDY & THE CONSPIRATORS,
PHIL CAMPBELL & THE BASTARD SONS

Manchester	Apollo	Feb 16
Glasgow	SEC	Feb 17
Doncaster	The Dome	Feb 19
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Feb 20

SON OF MAN

Leicester	The Musician	Mar 1

STEELHOUSE FESTIVAL
LIVING COLOUR, GUN, CROBOT, MORE

Ebbw Vale	Hafod-y-Dafal Farm	Jul 26-28

STEELY DAN, STEVE WINWOOD

Glasgow	The Hydro	Feb 20
Manchester	Arena	Feb 21

Classic Rock Recommends

UFO

KEVIN NIXON

Catch Phil Mogg and co. on their farewell tour, before it's lights out for good for one of rock's enduring greats.

See below for dates. Currently March 9 to April 5.

Birmingham	Genting Arena	Feb 23
London	Wembley Arena	Feb 25
Dublin	3 Arena	Feb 28

STONE BROKEN, THOSE DAMN CROWS

Aberdeen	Unit 51	Feb 7
Edinburgh	La Belle Angelle	Feb 8
Glasgow	Garage	Feb 9
Belfast	Voodoo Lounge	Feb 10
Newcastle	Riverside	Feb 12
Stoke-on-Trent	Sugarmill	Feb 13
Birmingham	The Mill	Feb 15
Norwich	Epic Studios	Feb 16
Leeds	Brundell Social Club	Feb 17
Hull	Welly	Feb 19
Liverpool	Arts Club	Feb 20
London	Islington Academy	Feb 22
Oxford	Academy 2	Feb 23
Cardiff	Globe	Feb 24
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Feb 26
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Feb 27

STONEDEAF FESTIVAL
GLENN HUGHES, DIAMOND HEAD, MASSIVE, MORE

Newark	Showground	Aug 24

THE STRANGLERS, DR FEELGOOD

Belfast	Ulster Hall	Feb 28
Dublin	Olympia	Mar 1
Scunthorpe	Baths Hall	Mar 5
Aberdeen	Beach Ballroom	Mar 7
Dunfermline	Alhambra	Mar 8
Glasgow	Academy	Mar 9
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 11
Reading	Hexagon	Mar 12
Newcastle	Academy	Mar 14
Leeds	Academy	Mar 15
Birmingham	Academy	Mar 16
Guildford	G Live	Mar 19
Southend-on-Sea	Cliffs Pavilion	Mar 21
London	Brixton Academy	Mar 22
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Mar 23
Bournemouth	Academy	Mar 25
Brighton	Dome	Mar 26
Bristol	Academy	Mar 28
Manchester	Apollo	Mar 30

THE STRUTS

Leeds	University Stylus	Feb 16
Nottingham	Rock City	Feb 17
Newcastle	Northumbria University	Feb 18
Glasgow	Garage	Feb 19
Bristol	SWX	Feb 22
Manchester	Academy 2	Feb 23
Birmingham	Institute	Feb 24
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Feb 26

TEDESCHI TRUCKS BAND

London	Palladium	Apr 27

TERRORVISION

London	Islington Assembly Hall	May 2
Bristol	SWX	May 3
Nottingham	Rock City	May 4
Manchester	The Ritz	May 5

THUNDER, DAN REED

Cardiff	St David's Hall	Feb 1
Ipswich	Regent Theatre	Feb 2
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Feb 4
York	Barbican	Feb 5
Gateshead	Sage	Feb 6
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Feb 8
Leicester	De Montfort Hall	Feb 9
Bath	Forum	Feb 11
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Feb 12

TOTO

London	Live At Chelsea Festival	Jun 13

TOUNDRA

Coventry	The Phoenix	Feb 7
London	Camden Black Heart	Feb 8
Bristol	The Old England	Feb 9

DEVIN TOWNSEND (UNPLUGGED)

London	Shepherd's Bush Bush Hall	Apr 24, 25
Bristol	St George's Hall	Apr 26
Leeds	City Varieties	Apr 27
Edinburgh	Jam House	Apr 29
Birmingham	Glee Club	Apr 30

FRANK TURNER, JIMMY EAT WORLD

Birmingham	Arena	Jan 22
Manchester	Victoria Warehouse	Jan 25
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Jan 27
Glasgow	Academy Jan 29	
Bournemouth	Windsor Hall	Feb 1
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Feb 2
London	Alexandra Palace	Feb 3

MARTIN TURNER EX-WISHBONE ASH

Darwen	Library Theatre	Mar 15
Hockley	Community Centre	Mar 22
Uckfield	Trading Boundaries	Mar 23
Hornchurch	Fairkytes Arts Centre	Mar 29
Sudbury	Quay Theatre	Mar 30
Hertford	Corn Exchange	Mar 31
Twickenham	Eel Pie Club	Apr 4
Newbury	Arlington Arts Centre	Apr 5
Worcester	Huntingdon Hall	Apr 6
Bridgend	Maesteg Town Hall	Apr 12
Pontypridd	Muni	Apr 13
Dartmouth	Flavel Arts Centre	Apr 14
Nantwich	Civic Hall	Apr 18
Hull	The Welly	Apr 19
Newcastle	The Cluny	Apr 20
Lowdham	Village Hall	Apr 26
Knaresborough	Frazer Theatre	Apr 27
Glasgow	The Ferry	May 2
Kinross	Green Hotel	May 3
Aberdeen	The Assembly	May 4
Havant	Spring Arts Centre	May 12

U.D.O.

Minehead	Giants Of Rock Festival	Jan 25
London	Islington Academy	Jan 26
Sheffield	Corporation	Jan 27

UFO

Oxford	Academy	Mar 9
Bournemouth	Academy	Mar 10
Cardiff	Tramshed	Mar 12
Birmingham	Town Hall	Mar 14
Pwllheli	Hard Rock Hell AOR Festival	Mar 15
Manchester	The Ritz	Mar 16
Leeds	Academy	Mar 17
Dublin	Academy	Mar 19
Belfast	Limelight	Mar 20
Cambridge	Junction	Mar 22
Northampton	Roadmender	Mar 23
Norwich	Waterfront	Mar 24
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 26
Newcastle	Academy	Mar 28
Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	Mar 29
Inverness	Ironworks	Mar 30
Glasgow	Academy	Mar 31
Hull	City Hall	Apr 2
Southampton	The Brook	Apr 3
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Apr 4
London	Kentish Town Forum	Apr 5

UNCLE ACID & THE DEADBEATS, BLOOD CEREMONY

Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Jan 16
Newcastle	Academy 2	Jan 17
Glasgow	G2	Jan 18
Belfast	Limelight 2	Jan 19
Dublin	Academy Green Room	Jan 20
Manchester	Gorilla	Jan 22
Birmingham	Institute 2	Jan 23
Cardiff	The Globe	Jan 24
London	Brixton Electric	Jan 26

WEEZER

London	Brixton Academy	Jun 29

PAUL WELLER

Westonbirt	Aboretum	Jun 14
Bedgebury	Pinetum	Jun 16
Thetford	Forest	Jun 21
Delamere	Forest	Jun 22
Dalby	Forest	Jun 28
Sherwood	Pines	Jun 29
Cannock	Chase Forest	Jul 6

WHISKEY MYERS

London	Camden Electric Ballroom	May 21
Birmingham	Institute	May 22
Manchester	The Ritz	May 23
Glasgow	Garage	May 24
Dublin	Whelan's	May 26

WILLIE AND THE BANDITS

Minehead	Giants Of Rock Festival	Jan 26
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Jan 30
Barnstaple	The Factory	Jan 31
Southampton	1865	Feb 1
Bridgwater	Cobblestones	Feb 8
Truro	Old Bakery	Feb 9
Gloucester	Guildhall	Feb 15
Shoreham-by-Sea	Ropetackle	Mar 6
Cardiff	Club Ifor Bach	Mar 7
Plymouth	Junction	Mar 8
Bristol	Thekla	Mar 9
Nottingham	Bodega	Mar 13
Liverpool	Academy 2	Mar 14
Sheffield	Academy 2	Mar 15
Preston	The Continental	Mar 16
Settle	Victoria Hall	Mar 17
York	Fibbers	Mar 19
Glasgow	Hug & Pint	Mar 20
Edinburgh	Voodoo Rooms	Mar 21
Newcastle	The Cluny	Mar 22
Scarborough	Top Secret	Mar 23
Cambridge	Junction 2	Mar 24
Norwich	Waterfront	Mar 27
Birmingham	Academy 3	Mar 28
Oxford	Academy 2	Mar 29
London	Islington Academy 2	Mar 30

DAMIAN WILSON & ADAM WAKEMAN (UNPLUGGED)

Cardiff	Acapela Studios	Jan 9
Bath	Chapel Arts Centre	Jan 10
Frome	Merlin Theatre	Jan 11
Torrington	Plough Arts Centre	Jan 11
Dartmouth	Flavel Arts Centre	Jan 13
London	Soho Pizza Express Live	Jan 17
Cranleigh	Arts Centre	Jan 18
Kirton in Lindsey	Town Hall	Jan 19
York	Live Music & Comedy Venue	Jan 20
Windsor	The Old Court	Jan 23
Colchester	Arts Centre	Jan 24
Chelmsford	Cramphorn Studio Theatre	Jan 25

KIM WILSON

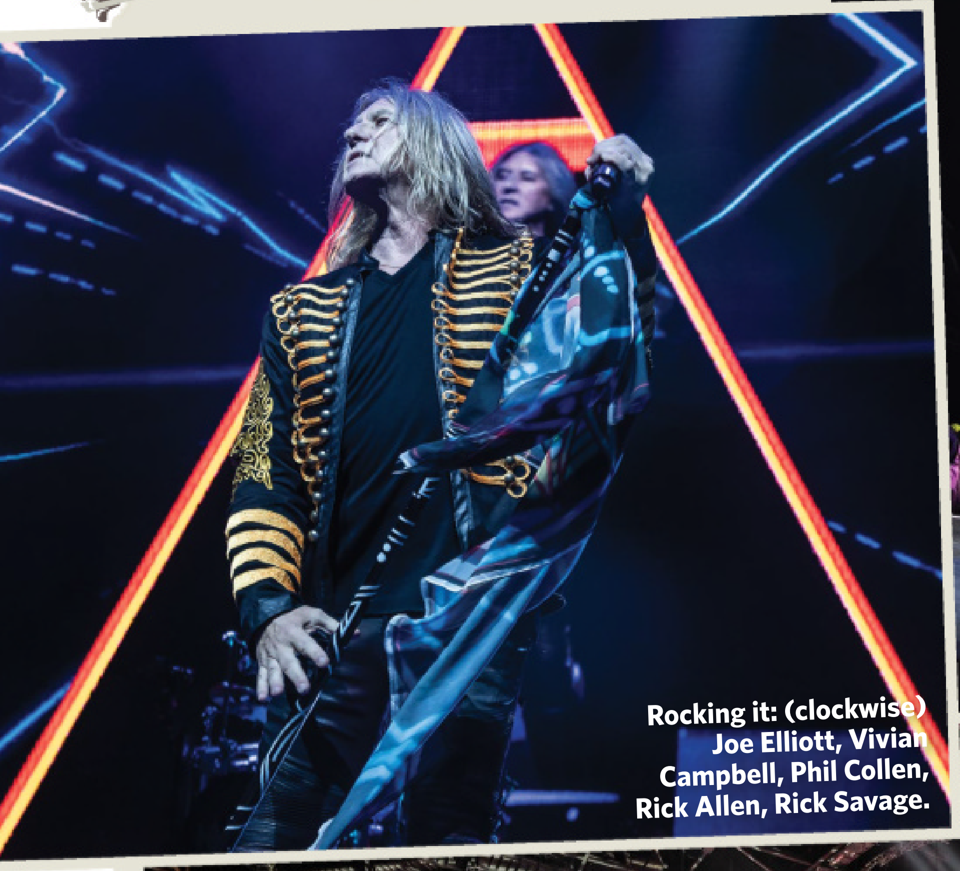
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Jan 15, 16

Y&T

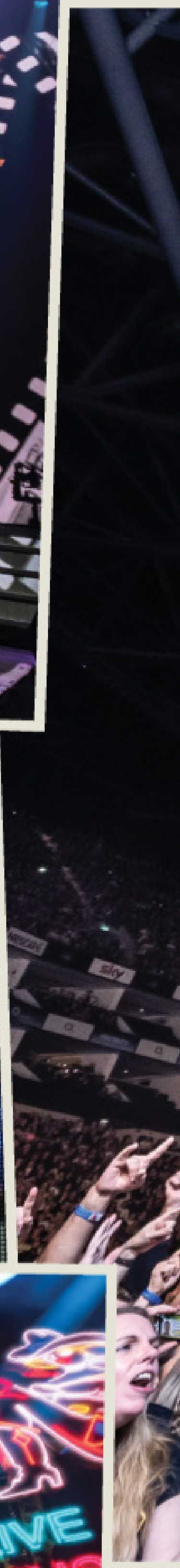
Southampton	The Brook	Oct 30
Bilston	Robin 2	Nov 1
London	Islington Academy	Nov 2
Cardiff	Tramshed	Nov 3
Glasgow	Garage	Nov 7
Newcastle	Academy	Nov 8
Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 9
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Nov 10

THE ZOMBIES

St Albans	Alban Arena	Jan 20



Rocking it: (clockwise) Joe Elliott, Vivian Campbell, Phil Collen, Rick Allen, Rick Savage.



Def Leppard / Cheap Trick

London O2 Arena

Joe Elliott and co's *Hysteria* victory lap comes to the capital, and there is much… well, hysteria.

★ Leppard fever has set in. As gaggles of men and women in *Hysteria* T-shirts exit North Greenwich station, a busker warbles his way through the album we're here for, and the TFL noticeboard is adorned with a truly terrible poem built around their song titles ("Love Bites and so does a dangerous Animal", "Tonight's the night to be Armageddon It…").

In 2017 *Hysteria* turned 30, and Team Def Leppard have been celebrating ever since with deluxe reissues and worldwide touring. Now, as 2018 closes, they've come to London for their first ever headline show at the O2.

It's the right time for Leppard to go large. Turbocharged, steroid-pumped and nitpicked with one of the most obsessive producers in the industry – in an era characterised by bottomless budgets – *Hysteria* also happened to boast fantastic tunes, which turned the Sheffield hopefuls into stars. It earned them a lot of sneering and scoffing as well, though the 25 million-plus sales worldwide presumably take the edge off that.

So they're playing the whole thing from start to finish, no surprises or tricks. It's the very definition of 'giving the people what they want'.

But tonight isn't just about Leppard. Early birds in the enormous arena are treated to a sparkling opening set from Illinois's finest, Cheap Trick. As it quickly becomes apparent, if you're going to throw *everything* at a massive tour this is who you'd want. "Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome to the stage the best fucking rock band you've ever seen," a woman purrs over the tannoy, as Rick Nielsen, Robin Zander and co. blast into a tight opening trio of gleeful rock'n'roll stomps *Hello There*, *Big Eyes* and (Move cover) *California Man*. Nielsen lobs increasingly generous fistfulls of plectrums into the crowd, and he and Zander command the stage with more high-octane pizzazz than we have any right to expect from two 60-something dudes in slightly weird suit'n'hat combos. In discussions of A-list rock voices that have/haven't survived the test of time, Zander tends to be rather overlooked. But he ranks among the best tonight, as triumphant in heartfelt power ballad *The Flame* as the spine-tinglingly joyful *I Want You To Want Me*. Aware that this isn't 'their' crowd, they stick to the stuff everyone knows (Cheap Trick fan or not) and it works like a charm.

Surrender and *Goodnight* bring things careering to an end, and Nielsen moves on from throwing plectrums to (slightly alarmingly) vinyl; hurtling it into the ducking crowd with gusto. Everyone's cheering heartily by now, so he whips out the five-necked guitar (well, they are opening for Def Leppard after all, who are playing *Hysteria* in full; *clearly* now's the time for five-necked guitars) and we all quietly agree that the bar has been set very high.

'*Photograph* leaves sugar-high grins in its wake.'

"Look out! He's gonna jump!" Joe Elliott takes a closer look at the front rows.

Robin Zander: one of rock's underrated voices.

And then it's time. The lights go down, the audience roars, a mash-up of Leppard tunes booms into the darkness, and the curtain lifts to reveal Phil Collen – topless and gleaming like a box-fresh GI Joe – striking the opening notes of *Women.* We shouldn't be surprised; Collen hasn't worn a shirt for more than five minutes since about 1983. Though in fairness, if we were that ripped at 60 we'd want to show it off too. Besides, there are plenty of flashy visuals and close-ups of all of them to draw our gaze in, as the killer first portion of the record gets under way. *Rocket, Animal, Love Bites*… fucking hell, no wonder Joe Elliott's literally skipping across the stage, strident frontman poses teleported from his youth in pristine condition.

His wardrobe, however, has been updated (tank tops replaced with tasteful jackets and jeans) while bassist Rick Savage looks pretty much exactly as he did in '87. Which is basically what you want when something so rampantly of-its-time as *Pour Some Sugar On Me* (Leppard's… ahem, rap-inspired moment) is on the cards. *'Razzle 'n' a dazzle 'n' a flash a little light', 'You got the peaches I got the cream!'*… Less Public Enemy, more Vanilla Ice. So magnificently stupid it's ingenious.

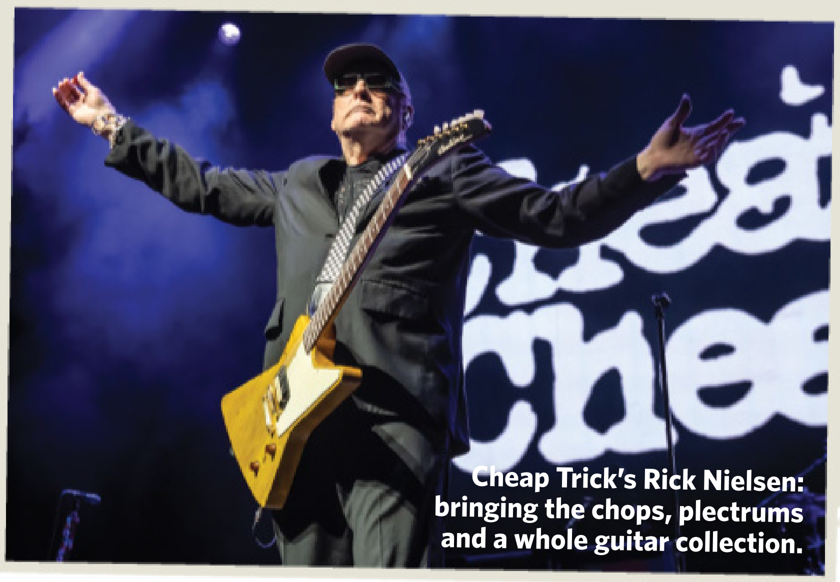
After a robust *Armageddon It*, a projection of the late, great Steve Clark – Leppard's gnarlier first guitarist and songwriter, who died at 30 of alcohol poisoning – offers a reminder of the key member and 'Terror Twin' who didn't make it (the other, Collen, quit drinking in the 80s). Other old and new photos of the band, the line-up of which hasn't changed for 26 years, add a charmingly nostalgic, family photo album-ish effect.

There's no getting away from the fact that Elliott can only just hit the highest notes these days, but he works round it well – the rest of his range is strong, and the audience are more than happy to join in for those peak-falsetto choruses. And he's got rock-solid backing. Collen and Vivian Campbell shred with soul, and no matter how many times people point out how impressive a one-armed drummer is, Rick Allen never disappoints.

The final two tracks (which, let's be honest, are where you'd most likely go to the loo or the bar) bring *Hysteria* home, before they return for an encore of select highlights from across their career. Well, they steer clear of anything post-90s. But while not having to sit through, say, *anything* from 2002's horrifying boyband foray *X* is a true blessing, they could've easily included a track from 2015's self-titled comeback. Go on fellas, swap the drippy *When Love And Hate Collide* for *Dangerous* or *Man Enough* next time, eh? Still, *Wasted* is an oomphy treat, *Let's Get Rocked* is as joyous as it is brain dead (*ie* extremely so), and *Photograph* leaves sugar-high grins in its wake.

There are those who lament bands trading off glories of yore as flagrantly as tonight's headliners. But when said glories are like those of Def Leppard and Cheap Trick… well, is it really such a bad thing? The mood throughout was celebratory, not stale. Def Leppard might not be relevant to most of the 'kids' today, but for the kids inside the 20,000 people at the O2 tonight they remain eternally so.

Words: **Polly Glass** Photos: **Kevin Nixon**



Cheap Trick's Rick Nielsen: bringing the chops, plectrums and a whole guitar collection.

'There's a sense that this is a band who've cheated the Grim Reaper.'

CJ and Ginger: barely even pausing for breath until after a turbo-charged *Caffeine Bomb*.

Rich Battersby: grinning from start to finish.

Danny McCormack steps up to the mic for *Geordie In Wonderland*.

The Wildhearts

London Camden Koko

Ginger and co. overcome hurdles both physical and psychological on their 25th-anniversary celebration of the band's debut album.

Somehow, The Wildhearts escaped their certain fate. In theory, their short, riotous, firework career should have been blown to smithereens across the skies of rock'n'roll some time in the early 90s. After their tragic death in a Shitsville bedsit gas explosion, their reputation as the best and brightest British Rock'n'roll band of their generation would now be unassailable. And their only full-length album, 1993's *Earth Vs The Wildhearts*, would be hailed worldwide as a timeless classic.

Instead, 25 years later we're here to see the reassembled same line-up perform that album in full, along with a clutch of other great songs from their stuttering, stop-start recording career that followed.

Admittedly the band haven't survived entirely unscathed; they are but a seven-and-a-half-legged riff machine these days, due to bassist Danny McCormack's lower limb amputation in 2016, and their original plan to support themselves on this tour as The Moodswingers was scuppered after doctors advised Ginger that his vocal cords might never recover.

Not that he needs to do a great deal in *Greetings From Shitsville* beyond play the opening bars once they launch into it; the entire first half of the song is belted out by a faithful audience that still stress the rude word in '*shit*sville' as lustily as they did when they were 15.

The moshpit might be less chaotic than it was at their gigs back in '93, but audience engagement is at an all-time high. So is The Wildhearts' need to do this. "Really fucking ready for a @thewildhearts show tonight," Ginger announced on Twitter. "Few demons to expel tonight."

At first the famously moody frontman seems riled, ranting about the lighting ("It's like we're in a fuckin' porn movie") as he takes the stage, but not for long. They barely even pause for breath until after a turbo-charged delivery of *Caffeine Bomb*, by which time he's charming us with flattering (and frankly inaccurate) observations that we "must have been sperm twenty-five years ago".

Danny, managing a gallant four songs upright tonight, adds to the sense that this is a band who have somehow cheated the Grim Reaper. In his flat cap, the bassist resembles Brian Johnson after he died and then rose from the grave feeling a little peaky. Ginger's TV tan is glowing with reanimated pallor, and although guitarist CJ doesn't seem to have aged beyond a haircut and a hat, and drummer Ritch Battersby grins throughout, there's a cartoonish look about them, like the men rock'n'roll couldn't kill.

Meanwhile, here comes *Loveshit* and yet another great riff and irresistible chorus, followed by a singalong to the soiled serenade of *The Miles Away Girl* and then *My Baby Is A Headfuck*, another magnificent ne'er-do-well's potty-mouthed anthem. And you know this is the antithesis of those shows where the back half of the audience are chatting among themselves when a hall-full of pint pots in the air greets the line "raise a glass to the underworld".

When that's followed by the staccato frenzy of *Sucker Punch*, you're reminded that *Earth Vs The Wildhearts* was one of *the* great 90s rock albums, bursting with hooks, ideas, wit, energy and arena-sized choruses. It should have been a *Hysteria* for the great unwashed, but wrong place, wrong time, wrong drugs… Oh well. Just be thankful we can celebrate them, still in one piece (give or take).

As they encore with another half-hour of curios and fan favourites, including Danny stepping up to the mic for *Geordie In Wonderland* ("gorgeous" is how Ginger rather charitably describes Danny's voice), we'd much rather be part of this modest but mad-for-it cult. 1995 single *I Wanna Go Where The People Go* is the belting, joyous finale, confirming that while the people haven't always reciprocated over the years, it's their loss. Earth versus The Wildhearts? Not always a fair fight, but tonight we saw a thumping away win.

Johnny Sharp

WILL IRELAND

Killing Joke

London Chalk Farm The Roundhouse

Post-punk veterans end their 40th anniversary tour in style.

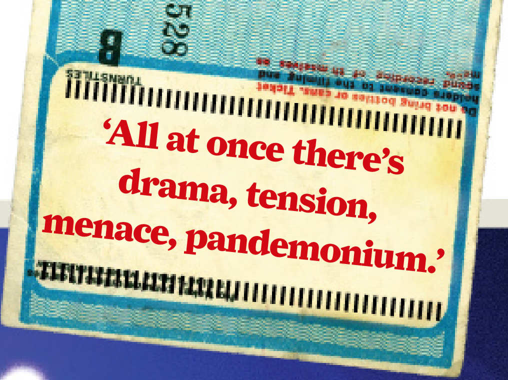
★ Jaz Coleman, his eyes wide open and teeth gritted behind a hideous grimace on a face painted deathly white, is shuddering to such a degree that you'd be forgiven for thinking he was plugged into the mains. All at once there's drama, tension and menace, and scenes of pandemonium breaking out in front of him… It's business as usual at the climax of Killing Joke's 40th anniversary tour.

Despite the rare moments of sentimentality by Coleman or bassist Youth's heartfelt praise of his bandmates, there's little tonight that feels like a band performing a victory lap or a roll of honour. Instead this is a continuation of Killing Joke's 40-year journey into the heart of darkness and the worst aspects of human nature. And with the band having made some of their best music since the turn of the decade, the spread of material tonight covers a satisfyingly amount of ground.

Delivered at a substantial and punishing volume, *Wardance* has lost none of its ability to thrill and terrify in equal measure. Geordie's scything guitars drive the brutality of *Eighties*, while the mutant techno of *European Super State* pumps with a hideous relevance.

Unless the apocalypse hits any time soon – and it might – only a fool would bet against Killing Joke making their half-century.

Julian Marszalek



Killing Joke's Jaz Coleman: electrifying – and seemingly electrified.

Hawklords

London Boston Music Room

State-of-the-art 'Wind-of-change' Space Rock.

★ With one foot in a space-rock past and another in a sci-fi future, the Hawklords have never sounded quite so vital, essential and fiercely contemporary as they do at present. The core of 2018's incarnation originally came together to pay tribute to the late Robert Calvert in '08. Now settled in a line-up of guitarist/vocalist Jerry Richards, synth player/vocalist Harvey Bainbridge, bassist/vocalist Tom Ashurst and drummer Dave Pearce, and augmented on this tour by sax-grooving Hawkwind co-founder Nik Turner (78 if he's a day and showing no signs of returning to Earth), their new seventh album, *Brave New World*, ranks with the year's best.

Tonight's set, still peppered with occasional Calverts (*The Aerospaceage Inferno*, *Ejection*), relies mostly on material from *BNW* (not least a phenomenal *Devil In My Head*) and 2017's *Six (Nightside)*, returning to the 'Wind mothership only for *Uncle Sam's On Mars* and a Turner-fronted *Master Of The Universe* encore. While these 'Lords are clearly informed by classic 'Wind (spoken-word interludes, riff-driven mantra hooks, futuristic instro-ambience, vocals that often employ the characteristic upward-tilted Calvert inflection so cannily employed since by John Lydon), deft nu-prog devices, boundless invention and excellent songs mark them out as true progressives more than worthy of your attention.

Ian Fortnam

Dan Reed Network

London 229 Club

A fumbling Reed fails to slam dunk the funk.

★ It's 30 years – a long time – since Dan Reed and his Network had their heyday, with hits, critical acclaim and audiences falling at his feet, and a lot has happened to him between then and now. What remains from that golden period, of course, is some great songs. Also that wonderful singing voice. What seems to have taken a bit of a hammering, however, is the unshakable confidence and self-assurance that he once had in spades.

Tonight it's clear that there's something amiss with Reed's 'performance management'. Sound problems right at the off certainly don't help. But where before if there was a technical hitch he would have engaged with the audience, tonight he croons the old jazz standard *All Of Me* and looks unsettled. At one point he asks his band: "What are we doing next?" By *Rainbow Child* the band seem to be getting some momentum going, but then it dissipates when Reed invites keyboard player Rob Daiker to the mic to sing one his own songs, then disappears off stage.

With Reed back, a great three-song run of *One Last Time*, *Get To You* and *Tiger In A Dress* looks to have put things back on track, but then guitarist Brion James comes to the mic to sing *Save The World*, Reed slips behind the rear-stage curtain, and with him goes the last chance of pulling some kind of victory from the jaws of, frankly, the bizarre.

Paul Henderson

Parquet Courts

London The Roundhouse

Collectivism, autonomy and the chaos dimension.

★ Sometimes a band just comes of age. Which is what happens to Parquet Courts when they blitz the Roundhouse with the most visceral hard-core funk and woozy psychedelia this now gentrified railway shed has witnessed since the golden age of 70s punk rock.

Kicking off with latest album *Wide Awake!*'s irresistible anthem *Total Football*, inspired in part by the philosophy of Holland's 1974 World Cup team, the Courts strike out. Drummer Max Savage's metronomic beat pins *Dust* to the floor, where it's swept on by deranged bassist Sean Yeaton, while brother A. Savage and Austin Brown hold a high-level instrumental summit in the brutal thrash medley *Almost Had To Start A Fight/In And Out Of Patience* that sends the audience crazy. So many tangents at work: the climate-change lament *Before The Water Gets Too High* comes from Texan roots with a possible nod to southern soul man Citizen Cope, but then the band's Brooklyn-based side rears up in *Dear Ramona*, whose subject matter would appeal to anyone infatuated with the Velvet Underground's *Loaded*. Maybe topping even those is *Master Of My Craft*, in which the twin guitars mesh like Television or Sonic Youth in their prime. Just before the final sonic blitzkrieg they drop *Mardi Gras Beads*, and the ghost of Syd Barrett is aboard.

As of now, Parquet Courts are untouchable.

Max Bell

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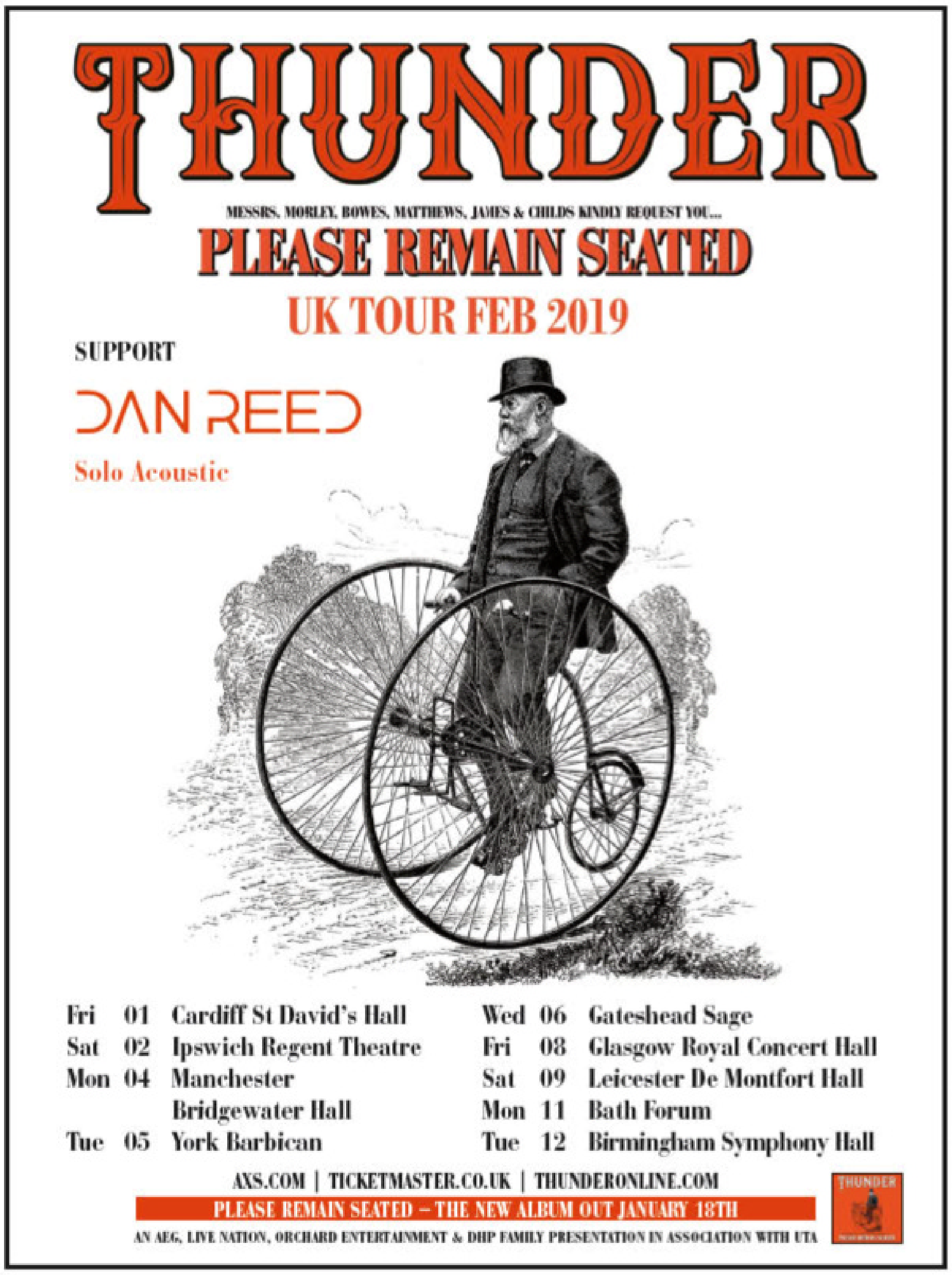
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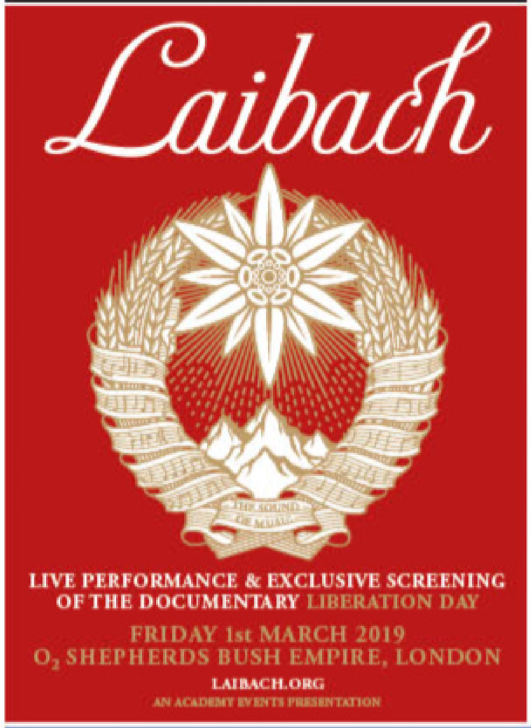

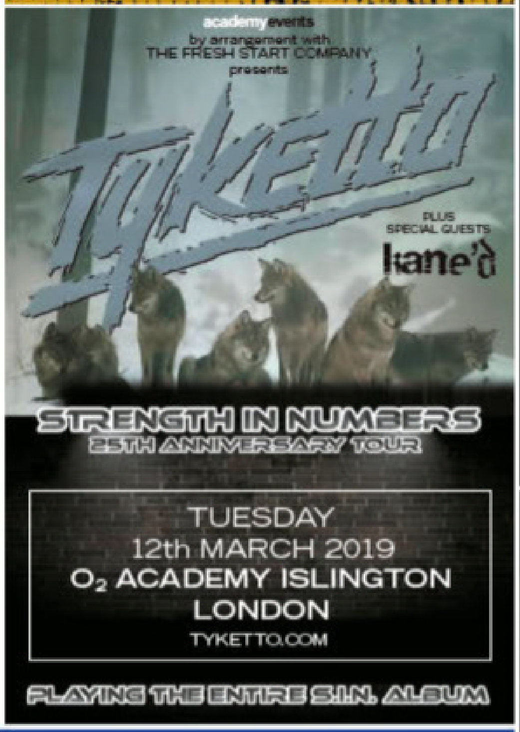

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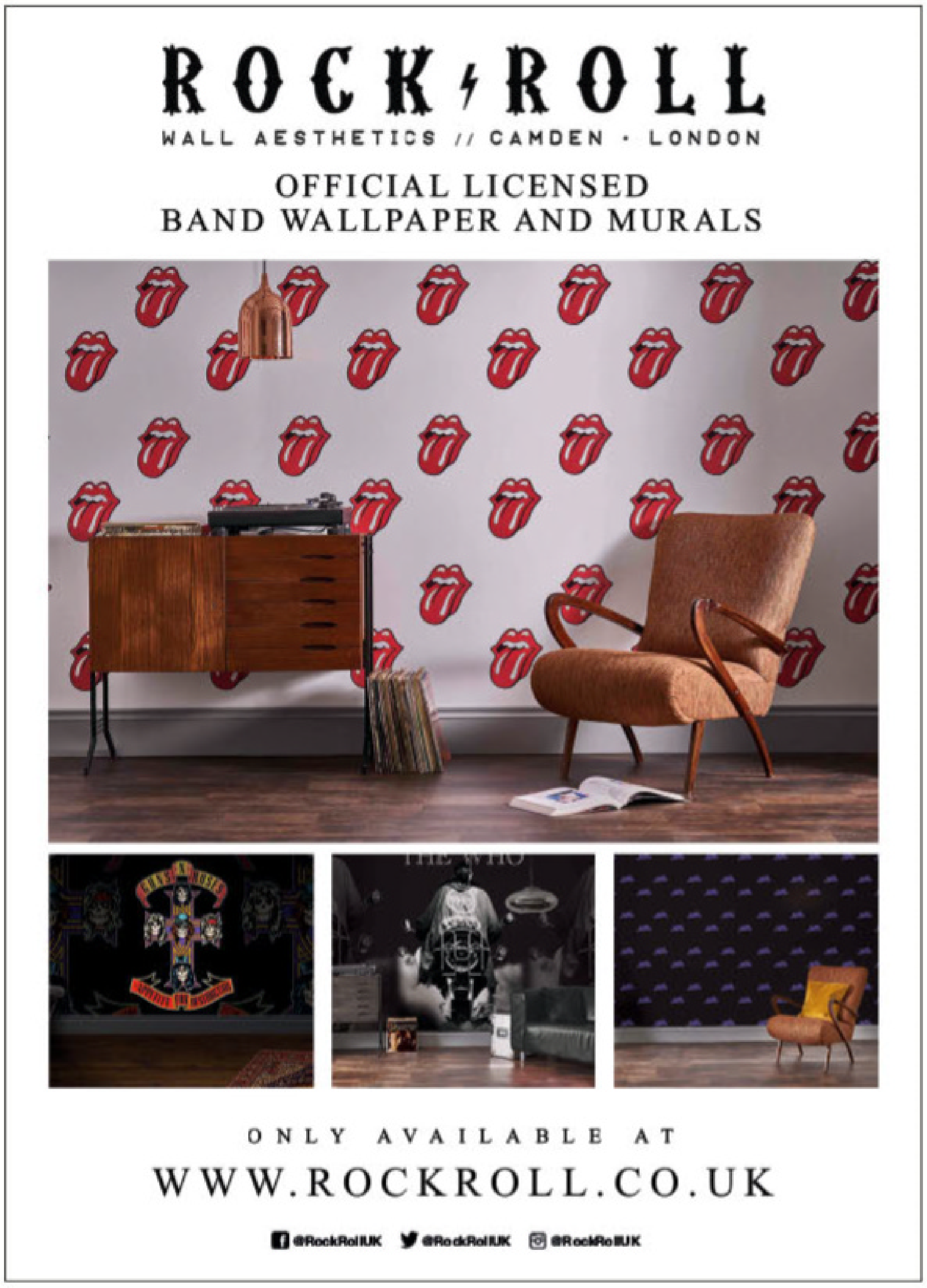
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The Soundtrack Of My Life

Alter Bridge singer and Slash conspirator MYLES KENNEDY on the records, artists and gigs that are of lasting significance to him.

Interview: **Nick Hasted**

Myles Kennedy is among today's finest hard rock vocalists, with both Alter Bridge and with Slash's band Myles Kennedy And The Conspirators. But that shouldn't obscure the varied musical background the singer/guitarist drew on with last year's more stark, autobiographical solo record *Year Of The Tiger*, or the fact that his first rock band, the Mayfield Four followed two jazz-influenced groups. Kennedy talks *Classic Rock* through his diverse musical life.

THE FIRST MUSIC I REMEMBER HEARING

Stevie Wonder on *Sesame Street*, performing *Superstition*. That may be one of the most memorable experiences I had, period, as a young person. I was about four. I remember thinking: "I don't understand what this is, but this is so cool." I was intrigued, and didn't know what to make of it, but knew that it was something special.

A RECORD I ASSOCIATE WITH MY MUM

When I think about my mom [who raised Kennedy alone from age four after his dad's death], I think about a cassette of songs by [ragtime king] Scott Joplin that had been my late father's. I remember hearing that a lot in the house. For whatever reason, I kept listening to it, years later. My little brother and I loved jazz, and went on to study it at school.

THE BEST LIVE ALBUM

Because I was at the point of my life as a young rock'n'roller when I had started doing my first gigs when I heard it, Iron Maiden's *Live After Death*. A classmate of mine turned me on to the band one day at lunch, in seventh or eighth grade [aged 12 or 13], and part of what intrigued me was his Eddie T-shirt. It was very compelling for a young person. And the music more than backs up the imagery.

THE FIRST SONG I PERFORMED LIVE

Rock And Roll by Led Zeppelin. I was fourteen, and I was as captivated by Led Zeppelin as I'd been by Stevie Wonder ten years earlier. That fascination had begun around that age, when I heard the intro to *Whole Lotta Love*. It was a pivotal moment where I stopped what I was doing and went: "What was that?" And then it got to the middle section, with those freaky sex sounds, and it sounded so dangerous and erotic and cool.

MY GUITAR HERO

I always go back to Jimmy Page. Because he's a riff master, and for his ability as a composer. I love that music. I'm sitting here on my day off today and I'm playing blues.

THE BEST RECORD I'VE MADE

The ones that resonate the most with me are when I'm really me laying it out there. This year's solo record, *Year Of The Tiger*, is one. But also going way back, the second Mayfield Four record, *Second Skin*. That has a special place for me.

THE WORST RECORD I MADE

Strangely enough, the first Mayfield Four record, *Fallout*. I should have spent more time writing and recording for that. It taught me that you should have lots of songs. We turned in the demos, and even the A&R guy said: "What do you mean you've only got these fifteen songs? You've got to have many, many, many more to pick the gems from!"

MY CULT HERO

Sturgill Simpson. He's part of this movement of a handful of really cool country artists who are taking it back to the country that a lot of us grew up listening to. But he's not just rehashing that approach, he's pushing the envelope, which he clearly did on his latest record, *A Sailor's Guide To Earth*. I think Sturgill Simpson is one of the finest songwriters today. It's his lyrics. I listen to a guy who's that poetic and wish I had half his talent.

MY FAVOURITE SINGER

Just for the sound of her beautiful, incredible voice, k.d. lang.

SATURDAY NIGHT SONG

September by Earth Wind And Fire just makes me want to party.

THE SONG THAT MAKES ME CRY

I'm an easy crier when it comes to music. The piece that is my favourite, but I almost can't listen to it because I will sob within the first few bars, is Rachmaninov's *Second Piano Concerto In C-minor*. It's so beautiful, haunting and heartbreaking. Even talking about it is getting me a little broken up.

THE GREATEST ALBUM OF ALL TIME

What's Going On by Marvin Gaye. Not just because it's a good record, but also because he took a huge chance. [Motown Records executive] Berry Gordy didn't want him to make a socially conscious record, but at that point in the world we needed a record like that. Frankly we could do with a record like that right now.

MY FAVOURITE SONGWRITER

Paul McCartney. His melodic sense is something that's always got a future. I think he and The Beatles will be remembered in the same way we remember Mozart.

THE SONG I WANT PLAYED AT MY FUNERAL

I have thought that far ahead. I want *All You Need Is Love* by The Beatles. I don't want it to be a sombre affair. I want that truth to be sung. I agree with it. I've seen what that four-letter word does at first hand. Meeting my wife and what she has done for me as a human being, and ultimately the love that she gave me, saved me. Did she open up something in me, and let me love? Absolutely. I'd gone in a hole, and had become very doubtful that anything like that actually existed, outside of family. I'd become jaded, and she made me aware that love's very real.

Year Of The Tiger is out now via Napalm Records.

"The Beatles will be remembered in the same way we remember Mozart."

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